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THE VALLEY  
OF HOMES





# *The Valley of Homes*

THE PONDS

YAUPOUGH

OAKLAND

1695 - 1952

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*By Ryerson Vervae*

*Printed for the Fiftieth Anniversary Committee*

OAKLAND, NEW JERSEY

1952

THE VALLEY OF HOMES

*Printed for* THE FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY COMMITTEE  
OAKLAND, NEW JERSEY

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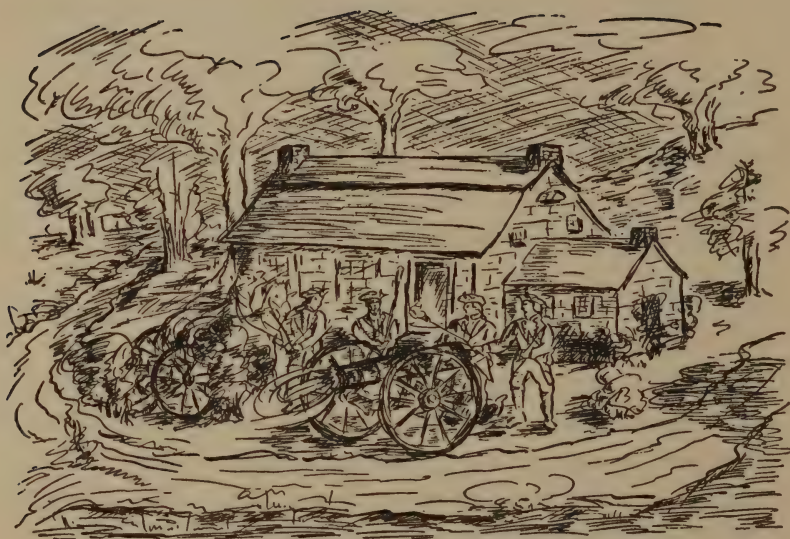


## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The writing of this book would have been impossible without the help of a great many people; so many, in fact, that all of their names cannot be listed. H. G. McNomee, Willard L. DeYoe, and Roger Baldwin, noted amateur historians, have given generously of their knowledge and libraries. Tedious and time-consuming research was done by a committee which included Eleanora Pringle, Florence Ridley, Margaret Pulis, Vivian Walker, Evelyn Kenney, and Robert Brinkema. The illustrations were collected and edited by Hazel Sanders and Wendell Kern. Past and present officials of the borough have contributed technical and historical information, older residents have given their time and memory to our research, and the libraries, newspapers, and historical societies of many New Jersey towns have co-operated with us. We are grateful to them all.

For the faults and omissions, the writer assumes full responsibility. As the work progressed, it became apparent that it should not have been attempted as a three-months project. It would be possible to spend years digging for the errant facts of Oakland's past, but the desire to have a history in print during the anniversary year has overwhelmed us. We do not claim to be definitive, but we have tried to be accurate and, we hope, interesting.

RYERSON VERVAET



Morning gun at the United States Army Headquarters at Henry Van Aulen's, Ramapo Valley Road, July 15, 1777. (Headquarters House now at the corner of Oakland Avenue, once the Ramapo Valley Road, and Franklin Avenue.)



## *Oakland*

*THE valley of Oakland lies along a gentle curve of the Ramapo River, sheltered on each side by the foothills of the Ramapo and Watchung Mountains. The ten square miles of the borough vary from rugged, rocky mountain peaks which rise to a height of 1,000 feet above sea level to grassy meadows at about 230 feet. In this valley and on these mountains townspeople have built their homes for the last 257 years. Many brooks, rushing toward the river from east and west, flow near houses of Dutch Colonial, Victorian, or modern ranch-house style, the homes of the 2,500 residents of Oakland. On Oakland Avenue, the maple-lined main street, are all three types, and many others which are less describable.*

*In Oakland spring comes in a burst. After the gray muddy days of March, suddenly the first leaf buds swell and begin to unfurl, and the fern fronds begin to push through the covering earth. In the*

swamps and ponds, the peepers raise their shrill outcry. The orioles and cardinals are back, beginning to build their nests. Dogwood, pale-pink azalea, and laurel fill the woods with blossoms, and the careful searcher may still find arbutus high in the hills. Lady's-slippers, dogtooth violets, anemones, and shooting stars sprinkle the ground until the slow, hot summer days, sometimes dramatically enlivened by a thundershower, bring columbines, gentians, and devil's paintbrushes to the woods and meadows. Now the blacksnakes, rattlesnakes, and copperheads uncurl from torpid slumber in the mountains and begin their ceaseless hunt for insects, rodents, and frogs. Turtles sun themselves on the rocks, and trout, pickerel, and bass snap at darning needles and flies. The ground hog and the rabbit, on their way to raid a garden, are seen more frequently. The hummingbird dips and whirs, his long beak deep in a flower, and the fledgling finches and wild canaries try their wings. Slowly the green of the leaves yellows and fades, the goldenrod, the joe-pye weed, and the asters appear, and the first sharp bite of frost turns the Virginia creeper crimson on the rocks. Soon the hills are ablaze with the vivid red, orange, and yellow of the oaks, maples, and beeches, the scarlet of the dogwood, and the deep purple-red of the white oaks and

*sumac. Gradually the leaves begin to drift down, and the world turns to the misty gray of October and November. Acrid smoke from leaf fires fills the air, wild ducks and geese fly overhead, and the bare skeletons of the trees etch themselves against a heavy sky. The hush of the first snow brings out the deer from their hiding places deep in the woods, and often an ice storm weaves destructive lace on every branch and twig. On the ponds, blue-black ice crackles under the children's skates, and their voices ring in the quiet air.*





THE VALLEY  
OF HOMES





## CHAPTER I



### *In the Beginning*

THE valley of Oakland, with its seasonal magic, is the result of thousands of centuries of heavings, shiftings, destructions, and reconstructions of the earth's surface, which gradually became serene enough for the establishment of the plant and animal life we know today.

The Ramapo Mountains, the foothills of the Appalachian Range, are formed of some of the oldest igneous rock in the world. Contractions of the earth's surface thrust up these jagged outcroppings which were once higher than the Rocky Mountains. Throughout billions of years, the ceaseless gales and torrential rains which swept the earth's surface eroded the Ramapos, and with the shifting of the earth's crust, troughlike valleys were formed. The Ramapo Valley is one of these.

A giant fault line runs along the west bank of the

Ramapo River. Here an enormous shudder of the earth's surface evidently caused the sinking of all the land between the Ramapos and the Atlantic Ocean. A shallow sea covered the valley for age after age, and the land beneath received a continuous soft sedimentary rain of materials washed down from the mountains. This sediment gradually formed a layer of rock about ten thousand feet thick which is now the floor of the valley. When the sea finally receded, volcanic eruptions raised the mountains on the east side of the valley. About this time dinosaurs and giant reptiles wandered over the hills and lowlands.

During the Glacial Age the topography of the area again underwent tremendous change. Glaciers a mile or two thick slid slowly down over the countryside, leveling off the mountains and filling in the valleys until all was a vast, flat plain. When the ice receded and melted, billions of tons of water rushed down through the softer deposits, carving out the valley once more. This happened at least three times, and probably five. In some spots, huge lumps of ice were left behind, and as the sand and gravel carried by the rushing water washed around them, the shoreline of a lake was formed. The Ramapo River, which cuts between two mountain rock formations too hard to erode quickly, undoubtedly dates from the Glacial Age.

## CHAPTER II



### *“Once There Was Indians All Over This Place”*

DURING the nineteen thirties a large sign which flaunted the gaily painted head of an Indian and the words:

ONCE THERE WAS INDIANS ALL OVER THIS PLACE

OAKLAND

BERGEN COUNTY, N. J.

ESTABLISHED 1869

hung on a post in the center of the plaza near the railroad station. It had been donated by a resident of Oakland who wished to remind passers-by of the early history of the borough. Oakland regarded it with pride until its grammatical inaccuracy was spotted by the sharp and humorous eyes of a writer



for *The New Yorker*, who gleefully reported it. Oakland was in a flurry. The donor explained that the offending sentence was taken from an early book on the Ramapo Valley, and dispatched a painter to surround it with quotation marks. He did not change the date, which was also inaccurate, since it marked the coming of the railroad to Oakland and not the time of settlement. The quotation marks were duly reported by *The New Yorker*, the controversy continued, and eventually the sign was removed. It has since been resurrected, and now hangs behind the Oakland Military Academy.

The sentence is accurate in meaning if not in structure. The Minsi Indians did live along the river, which they named Ramapo, "river of many round ponds." A tribe of the Lenni Lenape, or "original people," the Minsis' name meant "men of the stony country." Before the advent of the white men, the Lenape nation had been conquered by the Iroquois, but they were permitted to remain on their original hunting grounds. The Lenni Lenapes were called "the tribe of old women" by the Iroquois because of their peaceful inclinations.

In the beginning, Minsi legend tells, all of the tribe lived in the earth under a lake. The great spirit, Manito, permitted a wolf to kill a deer. One of the Minsis found a passage up from the lake bottom

shortly afterward and carried the meat underground, where all of the Minsis enjoyed it so much that they decided to move to drier land. The wolf became the tribe's totem.

In spite of their ferocious patron, the Minsis were decorous, tradition-bound, and peaceful. Known for their gentle care of the aged and their generosity with their belongings, they were kind and loving toward one another and even toward animals. If a rattlesnake rattled before they approached they did not kill it. A colonial writer says, "If several Indians came to a Christian's house, and the master of it gave one of them victuals and none to the rest, he would divide it into equal shares among his companions; if the Christian visited them, they would give him first cut of their victuals."

Indian families in the Ramapos lived in circular wikwams constructed by driving green chestnut saplings into the ground, bending the tops to form a rounded roof, and lacing the saplings together with vines and wild hemp ropes. The outsides of the dwellings were covered with strips of bark, and a central roof hole allowed the smoke from the fire to escape. Occasionally these homes were grouped together in villages, but usually they were alone near a favorite spring, section of the river, or a brook. When Indians moved to new hunting or fishing

grounds, they built new wikwams and sometimes used the old and new interchangeably as summer and winter residences. They travelled by dugouts, canoes, or on foot over trails which colonial settlers widened into roads. The Valley Road, Franklin Avenue, and Long Hill Road were probably once Indian trails.

Hunting and fishing furnished most of the Indians' food, although Indian women did a good deal of farming, stirring the ground with a pointed stick or cultivating it with a crude stone hoe. Squash, peas, beans, and corn were raised. The obligations of bride and groom were symbolized by the wedding ceremony, during which the husband presented a bone to his bride, representing meat for the family, and the wife offered him an ear of corn. Between stones the corn was ground into meal for "samp," a mush-like bread, or was charred and stored in thin clay pots buried in the earth for winter use. Wild grapes, strawberries, huckleberries, and nuts were gathered by the Indians, who later taught the colonists which were edible. Gifted in the medicinal use of roots and herbs, the Minsis used them in combination with steam baths and immersion in icy water to treat every illness.

Their scanty clothing was made of the skins of deer, wolves, bears, and raccoons. The men usually



wore a loin cloth, a blanket thrown over their shoulders, leggings, and moccasins. They plucked out their beards and most of their hair, leaving a scalp lock down the center of their heads to which they fastened painted feathers. For ceremonial occasions they wore necklaces and armbands of sharks' teeth, shells, and stone beads. Their wives wore short skin skirts with a loose tunic fastened on one shoulder. Before marriage the young girls painted their faces, presumably to attract a husband. A brilliantly dyed skirt of turkey feathers, worn with a complex head-dress of dyed deer hair and wampum was the women's most festive costume.

The customs and traditions of their ancestors were the Minsis' laws, and so ingrained was their feeling for justice and liberty that those who committed crimes atoned for their misdeeds voluntarily. Their children were trained with indulgence and love, and even strong persuasion was avoided as offering a kind of violence to the will. Cool and deliberate in public discussion, no Minsi would dream of interrupting another. Each had his opportunity to speak, according to tribal or family rank, and there was no whisper or question until it was certain that he had finished.

The Minsis respected their sachems, or leaders, who directed the councils and had chief disposition

of the lands. The general consent of the tribe was necessary, however, before land could be given away or sold. So fundamental was this democracy that representatives at all treaties and discussions were chosen by popular vote.

### CHAPTER III



## *The Colonists*

THROUGH a series of peaceful sales of land the Minsis' tenure of the Ramapo and Pompton Valleys came to an end with the seventeenth century. At that time the eastern part of Nova Caesaria, as New Jersey was called at first by the English, had been purchased by the Twenty-Four Proprietors of East Jersey from the estate of Sir George Carteret. The Proprietors were willing to sell part of their holdings, provided that the buyers would also negotiate with the Indians who were the hereditary owners of the land.

The descriptions of boundary lines on the original deeds from the Proprietors and the Indians are extremely vague, and if there were maps outlining the properties more exactly, they no longer exist. It is impossible, therefore, to determine exactly who

the first colonial owners of present-day Oakland were. It is probable, however, that parts of Oakland were included in the Schuyler and Brockholst purchase of 1695, the Ryerson and Westervelt purchase of 1709, and the Willocks and Johnson Patent (a tract extending from "The Big Rock at Small Lots [Glen Rock] to a short distance beyond Ponds Church") which was purchased from the Earl of Perth sometime in the early 1700's.

Arent Schuyler, the first colonial landholder in the area, was an Albany man known for his success in dealing with the Indians. He moved to New York in 1694, and almost at once the governors of New York and New Jersey selected him for a special mission to the Minsi Indians. On this trip he first saw and explored the fertile valleys and wooded hills of northwestern New Jersey, and when he returned to New York, he interested a group of friends in the purchase of 5,500 acres in the Pompton Valley. These men included Major Anthony Brockholst, a former Acting Governor of New York, Samuel Byard, George Ryerson, John Meit, Samuel Berrie (Ryerson's brother-in-law), and David and Hendrick Mandeville. The Indian deed which Schuyler signed for himself and his associates priced the land at 250 New York pounds or wampum and goods to that value. It was executed on June 5,



1695, by sachems of the Pompton and Minsi Indians, including the sachem Iauapagh, who agreed to the terms of the deed by making their marks. The patent for the same land was signed by the Proprietors on November 1, 1695.

It is probable that both Brockholst and Schuyler settled in the area in the spring of 1696 or 1697. Schuyler is said to have lived on the north side of "Ryerson's Pond," as Pompton Lake, then a much smaller body of water, was called. It is certain that his son Cornelius lived about 1730 on the property now occupied by the Pompton Lakes Training Camp.

Joris or George Ryerson probably came to New Jersey about 1701, settling in Pacquanac, now Wayne. In 1709 George's brother Ryer or Uriah, with Urie Westervelt, purchased a tract of land "on the north side of the Ramapo River between Pompton and The Ponds." Sicomac, an Indian burying ground, was explicitly excepted in this deed. Both Ryerson brothers were on the County Board of Justices and Freeholders from 1715 to 1723, as was Arent Schuyler.

By 1710, the year that Ponds Church was founded, there were about ten families living in or near The Ponds, and by the time of the Revolution, the number had grown to approximately one

hundred. Settlers traveled to The Ponds by two routes. One traced the course of the Saddle River north along the edge of the uplands to Paramus, ran along the Hohokus Creek to Wyckoff, and turned west to The Ponds. The other led from Acquackanonk, as Passaic was then called, northwest through Little Falls and Mountain View, and then followed the Pequannock and Ramapo Rivers north to The Ponds. Frequently travelers used primitive dugout canoes to transport themselves and their belongings. Many settlers came from Bergen, as Jersey City was called, and New York, attracted by the fertile, inexpensive farmlands which sold for from eighteen cents to \$1.75 an acre, or rented, as did one hundred-acre piece of land in the vicinity, for "two fat fowls on or before the feast of St. Michael the Archangel."

In 1724 Yan Romain, a "yeoman of Hackensack," purchased six hundred acres from the Willcox and Johnson Patent. The Garretson or Garrison family arrived about the same time, as did the Van Alens, Van Houtens, Bogerts, and Van Winkles. Simeon Van Winkle was distinguished as the owner of the first wagon in this region and as the progenitor of five generations of Ponds Church consistory members. Other names recorded on early deeds and land grants were Bush, De Baum, Demarest, Doremus, Hallenback, Hopper, Jones, Kipp, Post, Quacken-

bush, Shuart, Snyder, Storms, Voorhees, Ward, Winters, and Young. The Vander Hoff family is believed to have operated the first gristmill in the area on Page's Hill Brook, and the miller is said to have lived for a time in a cave at "the entrance to Yaupough Valley." Descendants of some of these families still live in Oakland, and many of the early members are buried in old Ponds Church cemetery, which dates from the early eighteenth century, and in several family burial grounds in Oakland.

These early settlers called the area around the church, including parts of present-day Pompton Lakes and Franklin Lakes, De Panne, a name generally interpreted to mean The Ponds, reminiscent of the Indian name, Ramapo. Occasionally, however, De Panne is thought to mean The Pan, a fanciful description of the geography of the circular valley, which narrows into a formation which might suggest the handle of a frying pan. The northern part of the valley was called Yaupough or Yawpo after the Minsi sachem Iauapagh who once ruled over it. In time the two names were used interchangeably.

## CHAPTER IV



### *Early Life in The Ponds*

LIFE was strenuous and uncertain for the pioneer settlers of Yaupough and The Ponds. For years the only roads were Indian paths, and travelers and farmers at work in the fields were in danger of attack from wolves and wildcats until the middle of the nineteenth century. Completely cut off from the rest of the world, the colonial Dutch were dependent on their own efforts to provide every necessity. Friendly Indians helped them learn methods of fishing, hunting, and cultivating Indian corn, but this was the only assistance they received. With the aid of primitive handmade plows, a crude forge, and a spinning wheel, these frugal, industrious Dutch-Americans raised their large families. The pattern of life they established continued unchanged for generations until the coming of the



railroad in 1869 brought industrialization to the valley.

Each farm was self-sufficient, so a family's wealth was computed by the number of children in it. Each farmer was his own carpenter, wheelwright, blacksmith, cobbler (after he had tanned the leather from his own cattle), cabinetmaker, and miller. He taught his sons the same skills as soon as they were old enough to pick up an awl. The farmwife and her daughters grew flax for linen goods and raised sheep for wool. They spun the thread on their spinning wheels and wove cloth for the family's clothing, blankets, and bed linen on crude hand looms. Winifred Demarest Gifford still possesses a blue and white quilt which was woven from wool sheared on the Demarest farm in the early 1800's. Young girls took their spinning wheels with them when they went for an afternoon's visit with a friend, since they were not considered eligible for marriage until they had completed a chestful of family linen. The women churned butter, made soap and candles, prepared and smoked the family pork and beef in the large fireplace chimneys, helped in the fields, kept their homes scrupulously clean, and still found time to raise herbs and flowers. Mrs. Gifford's family recollections include memories of an "out-door or summer kitchen which served as a smoke-

house in winter. There, also, was the huge brick baking oven which was still in use during my grandmother's time. My father remembered seeing dozens of loaves of bread being baked there simultaneously."

A typical Dutch Colonial house, a style in use in The Ponds for over a hundred years, was a small two-story structure built of rough stone cemented with mortar made of clay and hogs' hair. Usually it faced south regardless of the position of the road. Its identifying feature is the gambrel roof, with its short, shallow upper slope, long sweeping lower slope, and overhanging eaves under which the farmers hung corn and herbs to cure. The two-sectioned Dutch doors made it possible to let in light and air on fine days and still keep the baby in and the chickens out. Often the exterior of the door was ornamented with a carved diamond, a sign of the cross, or another symbol to furnish protection against witches and evil spirits.

The main rooms of the house were on the ground floor, and the upper story was used as a storage place for looms, winter provisions, and occasionally for sleeping quarters. The huge fireplace with its iron cooking pots and flint, steel, and tinderbox was the focal point of the sitting-room kitchen. The interior walls were roughly plastered, and the hand-

hewn beams were left uncovered. The wide-boarded floors were scrubbed frequently, then sanded and decorated by tracing patterns in the sand. Home-built tables, preserve closets, ladderback chairs, chests, and bureaus of handsome proportions furnished the rooms, and warming pans and carefully made featherbeds helped provide comfort in cold weather. The one real luxury a family might possess was a tall clock. Such a clock stood in the main hall of the Demarest family house for 117 years.

As the farm grew in prosperity, or as a son or daughter married, a second ell was frequently added to the house to serve as a kitchen and sleeping quarters for the new family. A third ell often served as a summer kitchen and dining room. This balanced three-unit architecture reached its height in Bergen County.

The farmers built their barns and outbuildings with as much care as their homes. A prosperous farm had a granary, a woodshed, an icehouse, a chickenhouse, and a pigpen as well as large storage and cattle barns.

Life became more abundant as the settlement at The Ponds grew in size and permanence. Relieved from grinding her own rye and cornmeal by the establishment of several water-powered gristmills at Page's Hill and Long Hill Brooks, the housewife

still ground her own spices with mortar and pestle and provided her family with substantial meals. "Supaen," or Indian samp, a method of cooking coarsely ground cornmeal, was a favorite dish served with home-made butter, cheese, and preserved peaches, plums, or pears. Each farm raised beef and pork for its own use, and a wide variety of vegetables was grown. Apples from the straw-thatched root cellar appeared on the table all winter as *drogh opple pai* (apple pie) or *opfel clantjes* (apple dumplings). Blackberries, huckleberries, and wild strawberries were eaten in season and preserved; mushrooms, hickory nuts, chestnuts, and black walnuts were gathered; venison, wild rabbit, partridge, and duck made a welcome change in meats. Fish of all sorts, even snapping turtle, found its way into the Dutch housewife's kitchen. One early recipe describes a savory stew made of two-inch pieces of eels and a skinned catfish, seasoned with salt, pepper, butter, and parsley.

Very little was bought or sold in the early days except for an occasional pound of coffee, tea, or sugar purchased from a traveling peddler, or some utensil which the farmer and his wife could not possibly make themselves. In later years the farmers sold butter, milk, strawberries, apples, and garden vegetables at Paterson, Newark, and New York.



These were carried by wagon and sleigh over dirt roads deep in mud in spring, dust in summer and snow in winter, to the Hamburg Turnpike at Pompton or the Franklin Turnpike at Suffern, and from these points to the market centers. Other roads, little more than narrow winding footpaths, led to Wyckoff, Hawthorne, and Haledon. Many of them had been built by the middle of the eighteenth century following an Assembly Act of 1682 appointing the first road commission in the state to convert Bergen County Indian trails into usable roads.

On these expeditions, farmers from The Ponds undoubtedly enjoyed the hospitality of ordinaries and taverns, the centers of political life and conviviality. The governing bodies of the county and townships and the courts habitually met in inns, and the innkeeper became a man of influence and the main source of information. A stagecoach line ran over the Paterson and Hamburg Turnpikes, and according to one authority, another ran down the Valley Road. Many of the stage taverns were lavish. Venison, bear, wild fowl, and trout were served, as well as domestic meat and fowl. An elaborate list of beverages included plain, royal, mulled and damasked cider, rum, eggnog, apple and peach brandy, whiskey, molasses beer, spruce beer, persimmon beer, mead, tiff, sillabub, sampson, and

hotch potch, not to mention metheglin or "perfect love."

At home as well as away the farmers in The Ponds realized, as one early history puts it, "that temperance and total abstinence are not synonymous." Cider, both sweet and hard, was served at table and at evening gatherings, with apple whiskey for some of the older men. Particularly for the young people, life was not all hard work. Picnics, hayrides, quilting bees, and "pause and pfingster," as the custom of riding out, the young lady mounted on a pillion behind her suitor, was called, all furnished diversion. One source says that bundling was practiced until about 1835, but this is somewhat doubtful considering the strict moral rules of the Dutch Reformed Church. Harvesting, slaughtering, and "house raising" were community efforts which were combined with parties and occasional barn dances. Strawberry festivals and fairs sponsored by the church were gay social occasions.

But although a certain amount of levity was encouraged, laxity was not, as the laws of the period show. "The Beastly Vice, drunkenness" was punished by one, two, and two shilling and sixpence fines for the first three offenses, and if the culprit proved unruly, he was put into the stocks until sober. "Profane swearing" cost the offender one

shilling; repeated stealing could, at the discretion of the court, be punished by death, and "all prizes, stage plays, games, masques, revels, cockfights, which excite the people to rudeness, cruelty, and looseness and irreligion" were discouraged by the courts. "Night-walking and revelling, after the hour of nine" were forbidden. Any disorderly conduct on the Sabbath was particularly reprehensible and was punished by imprisonment. The importance of family authority is shown by a law forbidding any son or daughter to marry without his parents' consent, and by another which stated that if an undutiful child "smite or curse his father or mother, except provoked thereunto for self preservation, upon complaint and proof from his parents, should be punished by death."

It is improbable, however, that many of the early settlers of The Ponds ran afoul of these injunctions. Men and women of sobriety and industry, their interests centered in family life and the church.

## CHAPTER V



### *Church of The Ponds*

**B**USY as the early settlers were, scratching out their livings from rocky soil, they found time for deep devotion to their religion. The church was the center of their spiritual and intellectual life, and in 1710, when a bare ten families had gathered in the area, they founded Ponds Church. The first church building, a small log structure, stood on what is now Oakland Avenue next to the cemetery. This church and the one at Acquackanonk were the only churches serving settlers scattered over the whole region north and west of Hackensack.

The first pastor, Guillian Bertholf, was the only Dutch minister in New Jersey. He had spiritual charge of all of the Dutch inhabitants of the state, so he was able to visit The Ponds only two or three times a year, traveling from Hackensack on twisting



paths which made his trip at least twenty-five miles and a day and a half long. Either Bertholf or his son later lived in the house owned by Dr. Donald C. Lord just over the borough line in Mahwah.

After Bertholf's resignation in 1724, The Ponds shared a minister with Belleville and Acquackanonk and then with Paramus. Salaries were about £80 or \$200 a year. This system of sharing pastors, later with Preakness and Wyckoff, continued until 1845, when The Ponds engaged a minister whose services were exclusively its own.

A new hexagonal church was built about 1740, and the original log church became a cow barn. The hexagonal form, like all early Dutch churches, was designed to center attention on the high pulpit. The interior of the church was simply furnished. The floor was covered with straw, and benches around the walls seated the men, and the ladies brought their own rushbottomed chairs and small foot stoves with warm coals in them. These little stoves, decorated and inscribed with the lady's initials, were a popular gift for a bride or a sweetheart. The new hexagonal building, made of stones gathered by the farmers as they cleared their lands, was placed at the corner of Oakland Avenue and Ponds Road.

Services were held about once a month and were the occasion for an all-day gathering of the people

of the countryside. The farmers bundled their families and a supply of food into wagons for the journey. After the ceremonial paced ringing of the church bell, the day was spent in and about the church in alternate worship and gossip. The services were austere, with long sermons delivered in Dutch, loud and earnest prayers, and slow, solemn chanting of hymns led by the *voorlesser*. A sprightly rhythm in a hymn would have been considered as indecent as nodding or inattention on the part of the congregation. The consistory collected the offering with velvet bags on the end of long poles which were useful for nudging any parishioner who looked drowsy. Often, however, the solemn services were enlivened by weddings and baptisms.

The church was not only a house of worship but also the center of government, education, politics, and recreation. All of the social activities of the community revolved around it. The church green was the meeting place where citizens learned the news, discussed political policy, elected town officers, and exchanged opinions on crops. The minister, the most learned man in the community, was a powerful influence in molding ideas.

Not all of the gatherings were serious, however. The church fair and strawberry festival was an eagerly awaited annual event, usually held on the

Fourth of July. Booths were set up in stalls where the churchgoers hitched their horses while attending services, a lavish supper was served in a huge tent, and the gala day ended with singing. Townspeople gathered in the church to celebrate Christmas together. Carols were sung, the children spoke "pieces," and Santa emerged from behind a curtain to distribute gifts from the huge tree. Another occasion for gaiety was the annual donation party which was held at the parsonage. This custom, designed to supplement the minister's meager salary, continued until about 1901. Any home product was a ticket to the affair: patchwork quilts, handwork, half a pig or a side of beef, preserves, sugar, flour, or whatever else the family could spare.

During the Revolution Benjamin Vander Linde, a noted Colonial minister, was appointed pastor of The Ponds. His call, prepared in Ponds Church, was the first entry in the old Dutch record book which was later destroyed by fire. A copy is in the records of Paramus Church. Vander Linde was required to preach every fifth Sabbath for which service Ponds Church contributed £25 New York money, or about \$62.50, to his annual salary of £60. His tact and understanding wisdom brought the congregation successfully through the difficult war years. Vander Linde died in 1789, and Peter Leydt, his

successor, was the first pastor to be ordained in Ponds Church. The next pastor, Peter De Witt, instituted occasional services in English and appointed a chorister for English singing. When De Witt died in 1809, he was buried beneath the pulpit of Ponds Church, where his body remained until 1936 when the old building was demolished, and his descendants had his remains disinterred and placed in their family vault.

After De Witt's death the church went through a trying period. For two years it was served by irregular pastors, and in 1811 the Reverend John Demarest was called. He was paid \$270 in cash, given the use of a parsonage with a 65-acre farm, and supplied with wood and grain by parishioners. All was peaceful until, at a gathering, he shook hands with the guests but failed to notice one person who stood somewhat in the background. The man afterward charged that he had been slighted, Demarest claimed that he had not seen him and was accused of lying, and a trial was held. The minister was vindicated, and the complaining member was suspended from the congregation. There were apparently two factions, however, and attempts to make a final peace were unsuccessful. The interest on the church mortgage was not paid, and in 1820 Martin Van Houten bought it for nine dollars at a sheriff's



sale and locked the door. Three months later Demarest was dismissed, and he was not recalled when the church was deeded back to the congregation two years later.

In 1829 the hexagonal stone church was replaced. Some of the stones of the old church were used in the new building, and stoves were installed for the first time. In 1880 the building was remodeled; Gothic windows were substituted for the many-paned rectangles, and a single arched doorway replaced the two doors characteristic of early Dutch church architecture.

During the late 1800's the Miter Society was organized to assist the work of the church, but it soon disbanded. Then the Ivy Society, founded with a similar aim, expanded until it opened its own building, Ivy Hall, on Oakland Avenue. This building was the social, civic, and, after 1904 when the borough took it over, the municipal center of the community until it burned in 1922. The location of Ivy Hall recognized the northward shift of the population, which made use of the increasingly dilapidated Ponds Church more and more inconvenient for parishioners. The Ladies' Aid Society, which was organized in 1917, recognized the inevitable in 1921 when it pledged \$1,000 toward erecting Ponds Chapel.



The brown-shingled chapel, with a flat-topped trapezoidal tower added in 1934, was built on Oakland Avenue about three-quarters of a mile north of the old church to serve as a "Workhouse of the Lord." One of its "supplied" ministers during this period was Illsley Boone, who became known as a proponent of visual education, and later as the founder of the nudist movement in America. The Reverend Clinton E. Stoneton has been minister since 1934.

The original Ponds Church building fell into disrepair. Oakland hoped to preserve it as a historic landmark, but architects ruled the structure unsafe. In 1936, with the aid of WPA funds, the building was razed, and its stones were used in The Ponds Memorial Building, an enlarged replica of the church of 1829 which is crowned by the same weather vane. WPA regulations forbade the use of its funds for sectarian purposes, but The Ponds Memorial Building continues the community function of its parent building.

Almost next door, at Ponds Chapel, Oakland's religious life continues the unbroken tradition established in 1710.

## CHAPTER VI



### *The War of Independence*

CUT off by geography from the rest of Bergen County, the farmers of Yaupough and The Ponds did not at first take a very active interest in the events leading up to the Revolutionary War. Most of the Dutch settlers were traditionally for liberty, however. From childhood they heard fireside stories of their ancestors' valor under the Prince of Orange, when civil and religious liberty were secured for Holland, and they naturally sided with the colonists against the King. Probably some farmers from The Ponds joined with other citizens of the county on the Green in Hackensack on July 25, 1774, when Bergen pledged itself to follow any action the colony might take to resist the tax policies of King George III. A few, like some other prosperous and conservative farmers in Bergen County, probably

saw little need for a change in government. On the whole, however, settlers of The Ponds had no use for Tories, as an English schoolmaster named Rench, who taught in a building opposite old Ponds Church, discovered in 1775. When it was found that he was pro-British he was dismissed and forced to flee to New York, then under British control. Rench returned after the war, but found himself so unpopular that he soon left.

It is not known for certain whether any residents of The Ponds were members of the Continental Army, but in 1776 a George Ryerson was adjutant of a regiment of the Bergen County Militia, Crynes Bartholf was a captain, and Benjamin Romin, Cornelius P. Westervelt, and Epsom Van Winkle were sergeants. The list of privates includes all the early family names of the area, and probably some came from The Ponds. A John Bertholf who lived up the valley is said to have served repeated enlistments in the Army taking the place of other men with family responsibilities.

No actual fighting occurred in the valley, but all through the war troops and supply trains moved intermittently over Valley Road and Cannon Ball Road, which extended along the ridge of the Ramapos from Pompton to Suffern. Traces of this road, also called the Corduroy Road because of the log

coverings over its swampy sections, still remain. The Valley Road was in danger of raids by the British during most of the war so the mountain highway became an important line of communication with West Point. Iron supplies from Ryerson's Foundry in Pompton were taken over it to Suffern when American troops were stationed there in 1780, and links of the great iron chain, forged at Ringwood to keep the British fleet away from West Point, are said to have traveled this route. In 1777 General Nathaniel Heard of the New Jersey Militia was quartered at Pompton to guard the entrance of strategic Cannon Ball Road from capture.

During the war Washington passed through the valley at least five times, and troop contingents used the road frequently. The earliest maps of the area, drawn by Robert Erskine, cartographer to the Continental Army, show Ponds Church, two gristmills at Page's Corner, houses identified as belonging to Abraham Schuyler, Henry Shute, Bogart, Henry Van Alen, Cond. Bogart, Nich. Romine, Garret Garetson, and others whose occupants were not named. The scale of the maps is inaccurate so it is impossible to place all of these houses exactly, but the location of the Van Alen House on Page's Corner is certain. This house, now owned by Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Stern, was Washington's head-

quarters on July 14, 1777. Following are the General Orders and the Report to the President of the Continental Congress made at this house.

#### GENERAL ORDERS

*Headquarters, at Van Aulen's, July 14, 1777.*  
*Parole ——. Countersign ——*

Each Major General will order the guards necessary for the security of his own division.

The Quartermaster General with his deputies will mark out the ground for the encampment of each division tomorrow. And as the army will arrive on its ground early in the day, as soon as the Men are settled in their quarters, the Officers are critically to inspect their arms and accoutrements, and have them put in the best order possible. The Commander in Chief was surprised today to see the bad condition of many arms, they being not only unfit for fire, but very rusty, which latter defect it is certainly in the power of every man to prevent, and the neglect of it must arise from an inexcusable inattention of the officers.

The tents are to be struck at gun-firing tomorrow morning (which will be at the usual time) and the whole army got ready to march. At five o'clock one field piece is to be fired: and then the march is to begin; and as the baggage of each brigade will join its brigade tonight, 'tis to follow close after it tomorrow. The whole army to march off from the left, in half platoons, the brigades following each other in the order observed this day, saving that the baggage (as before directed)



will immediately follow the brigade to which it belongs. As the distance is not great, no part of the army is to halt 'till it arrives at the ground for encamping.

If it should rain tomorrow morning, the army is to remain in its present encampment.

On a march neither officer, nor soldier, is to pay a salute or pull of the hat to the Commander in Chief or other officer passing by.

#### TO THE PRESIDENT OF CONGRESS

*Vanaulens, 8 Miles from Pumpton Plains, July  
14, 1777*

Sir: I arrived here this afternoon with the Army, after a very fatiguing March, owing to the Roads which have become extremely deep and miry from the late Rains. I intend to proceed in the Morning towards the North River, if the Weather permits. At present it is cloudy and heavy and there is an Appearance of more Rain.

By the Express, who will deliver this, I just now recd. a Letter from Genl. Schuyler, advising for the first time, that General St. Clair is not in the Hands of the Enemy. As the Express has a large Packet for Congress from General Schuyler, I presume they will be informed of all the Intelligence he was possessed of respecting our Affairs in his department, and therefore I shall not trouble them with a Copy of his Letter to myself upon the Subject. I should be happy if they had a more agreeable aspect than they seem to have. I am  
&ca.

On July 15, 1777, it must have been marching weather because headquarters was established at the Clove north of Suffern. It remained there and at Ramapough, now Darlington, in the Henry Hopper house, which had been built by another Van Alen, until July 25, 1777.

Another distinguished visitor, the Marquis de Chastellux, a major general under the command of General Rochambeau, journeyed through the Ramapo Valley on November 23, 1780, on his way to inspect the Continental Army and to meet his old friend Lafayette, who was stationed near the Dey Mansion in Preakness. In his book, *Travels in North America in the Years 1780-1782*, he describes following "for some time the rivulet of Ramapog." M. De Chastellux, whose French sense of etiquette was very correct, made several detours which took him past Ponds Church. He wished to go directly to Lafayette's camp on the left bank of the Goffle Brook because he was "desirous of being presented by him to General Washington." His guide, however, took him to Pompton and the "Tochaw Road; but being informed that it led me straight into the main body of the army, without passing by the van commanded by M. de la Fayette, I enquired for some crossroad to his quarters, and one was pointed out to me by which, passing near

a sort of lake which forms a very agreeable point of view (Franklin Lake) and then crossing some very beautiful woods, I arrived at a stream which falls into the Second River (Passaic River), exactly at the spot where M. de la Fayette was encamped. His posts lined the rivulet; they were well disposed and in good order. At length I arrived at the camp, but the Marquis was not there.”

A formal escort had awaited the Marquis de Chastellux at Paramus where he was expected, and Lafayette was at main headquarters at the Dey Mansion. The disappointed Frenchman rested his horses and then set out, accompanied by Colonel MacHenry, Lafayette's aide, for the Dey Mansion. After visiting the capital at Philadelphia, M. De Chastellux journeyed again on the Valley Road when he returned to the headquarters of the French Army in New England.

For about three years during the Revolution Yaupough or The Ponds was the county seat of Bergen, the only one besides Hackensack the county has ever had.

On March 22, 1780, the British, beleaguered on the island of Manhattan and desperate for food and supplies, passed through Hackensack on their way to raid the farmlands and garrison at Paramus. At 3:00 A.M. they burned the Courthouse. Old records

listing damages done by the British in New Jersey include the following entry:

	£	S
To Burning the Courthouse	500	
To the Town Clock	57	12

For the sake of safety, the county courts were moved to Ponds Church, where they were held until a log courthouse and jail were built on the southern bank of Page's Hill Brook on the west side of Oakland Avenue. The jail adjoined the house of Sheriff Abraham Manning, The Ponds' outstanding Revolutionary, who had helped to organize a local group to fight Tories. Once he led a detachment against a Tory contingent at Hopperstown, now Hohokus. Spying the unfortunate Schoolmaster Rensch, he fired at him, but succeeded only in putting a bullet through his hat.

Sheriff Manning was evidently choleric as well as patriotic. Noah Collington or Kellingham, a traitor who was also accused of murder, was imprisoned at the Yaupough Jail, and because of raw weather he was allowed a fire. Seizing the opportunity, he attempted to escape late one night by burning the building. The Miller Vanderhoff, who was "watching his dam during a freshet," saw the flames and gave the alarm. Sheriff Manning was so incensed

that he flogged the prisoner severely and had to summon a doctor to get him in shape for his trial the following morning. Kellingham was hanged on a gallows beside the jail the same day.

From time to time during the war British raiders came to The Ponds in search of horses and supplies. On one occasion, the story goes, a farmer who lived in the house now owned by Dr. Lord saved four horses from falling into British hands. When he was asked where his horses were, Farmer Bertholf said he had none and pointed across the road to the Garrison farm where a Negro farmhand was dragging logs with a fine team. The farmhand saw the redcoats coming, unhitched the team, and galloped across the river to the safety of the mountains. A few minutes later he was joined by Bertholf with *his* horses, which had been out of sight in a lower pasture. The British soldiers' gullibility had given both men time to escape.

The Garrison house was known as "The Fort" because of its sturdy construction. A post rider from Washington's headquarters at Newburgh, who was on his way to the old Colfax homestead in Pompton Lakes which was also used as a headquarters, once took refuge there. Attacked by the British on the Valley Road, the rider was seriously wounded, but he managed to crawl into the house. In spite of care-



ful nursing he died of his wounds. His body was buried in the adjoining field and for years this plot was never plowed. In time, however, all trace of the grave disappeared.

Another absolutely undocumented tale concerns an inhabitant who made quite a business of stealing horses from one detachment of British and selling them to another!

Of all the British sympathizers in the region, however, Claudius Smith, the notorious outlaw, was the most feared. Although Smith's exploits were confined mostly to Orange County, New York, where his parents kept a tavern, he occasionally terrorized the entire Ramapo Valley. Early in the war, after a successful career as a highwayman and brigand, he was hired by the British to raid and plunder New York and northern New Jersey farms and to pick up what information he could about Continental troop movements. One story relates that General Washington once misled the British about his plans for an entire campaign by allowing a messenger, laden with false documents and information, to be captured on the Valley Road by Smith's brigands. The messenger survived the war as a prisoner of the British at New York, but Claudius Smith was captured and hanged at Goshen, New York.

Tradition says that a powdermill was built and

operated on the Ramapo during the Revolution, but there is no proof of this. However, the farms of The Ponds were a valuable source of supply for the Continental Army. Apparently the troops did not abuse this privilege, since early Franklin Township records list only one black mark against them: the theft of "4 hogs, a haffer, and a hive of honey valued at 5 pounds from Simeon Van Winkle."

Van Winkle's five pounds, if he received it in Continental dollars, would have done him little good. A bill dated January 5, 1781, illustrates the shocking depreciation of Continental currency.

6¾yds. calico	\$600
6 yds chintz	752
4½ yds moreen	450
4 hankerchiefs	400
8 yds quality binding	32
1 skein of silk	10
	<hr/>
	\$2,244.

One legacy left by the British to the Ramapos was the "Jackson Whites" who found their way to the mountains near Darlington. Their name came from an Englishman who was commissioned by the British Army to round up a group of English women and bring them to the British encampment in New York. Resistance among the females was high, so many were shanghaied, and even then Jackson had

to fill out his quota with women from the West Indies. These unfortunates were kept in a stockade on the island of New York while the British troops remained. Overwhelmed and in flight from the Continental Army, the soldiers had no time or inclination to take the women with them. They were released from the stockade, however, and somehow made their way across the river. The Ramapos were the first sheltered hiding place they found, and there they settled, joined by remnants of the Hessian forces, army deserters, American Indians, and later fugitive Negro slaves. Most of them moved deeper into the mountains, where they led a primitive existence as outcasts of society. Descendants of this peculiar inbred group still exist, although in the last decades education has begun to reclaim them as useful citizens.

A late nineteenth-century Jackson White, "Uncle Rich" DeGroate, would come to The Ponds at periodic intervals to work a few days for food and supplies. He always dressed in tattered garments of crudely cut skins, without covering his legs or his feet even in severe weather. John Dickerman, who owned Oakland's last team of oxen, and Pat Foster, although not Jackson Whites, lived similarly recluse and primitive lives in the hills of Oakland within the last fifteen years.

## CHAPTER VII



### *War, the Iron Horse, and Industry*

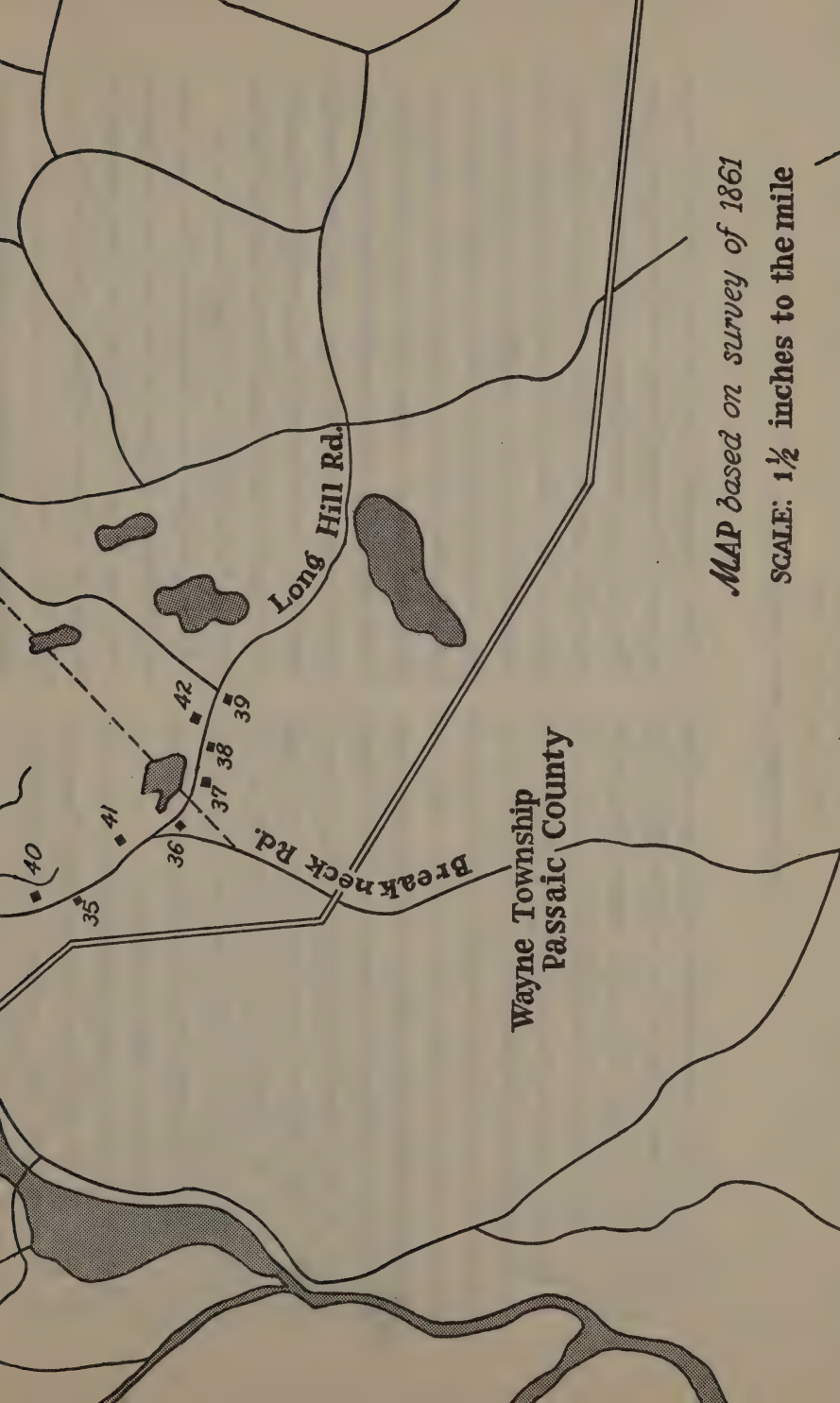
DURING the late 1700's and early 1800's life in The Ponds continued its serene cycle. A few grist-mills prospered, woodcutters tended their charcoal pits in the Ramapos, but farming still occupied most families. Even the hills and high valleys, some of them incredibly rocky, were farmed, and the woods were cut over repeatedly for lumber and firewood. Wood roads ran up into the mountains in all directions, crossing the river by fords until about 1835, when the first bridge over the river between Pompton and Suffern was built at Midvale Road. Some farmers sold firewood, fruit, and vegetables in the markets in Paterson and Newark, and in fall and winter they amused themselves and varied the family diet by hunting, trapping, and fishing.

Occasionally they collected the \$10 bounty offered for the head of a wolf.

One Sunday in 1861 The Ponds was electrified by news of the secession of the Southern states. Word came at the close of church service. "Some sympathized with the seceders and others with 'Old Abe,'" wrote Dr. Peter E. Demarest, who was a child at the time. The Ponds, predominantly Democratic, had voted against Lincoln in 1860. "Each Sunday after that passed like every other Sunday with discussions pro and con until came the day when Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation was published. Then excitement mounted as several families here owned one or more slaves," Dr. Demarest continued. His father was drafted, and like many others, hired a substitute, William Monteyna, who entered the Army and returned safely.

A favorite spot where townsfolk gathered to discuss the war was "Hank" Spear's Tavern on Oakland Avenue near the church. Travelers from New York were eagerly questioned about the latest developments, and the news was carried northward to farmhouses in the upper end of the valley. John Haring, a hand-loom weaver, brought the mail and the weekly newspapers back from Paterson each Saturday night and distributed the news at the tavern and again after Sunday church service. Fur-





*MAP based on survey of 1861*  
**SCALE: 1½ inches to the mile**

**Wayne Township  
Passaic County**

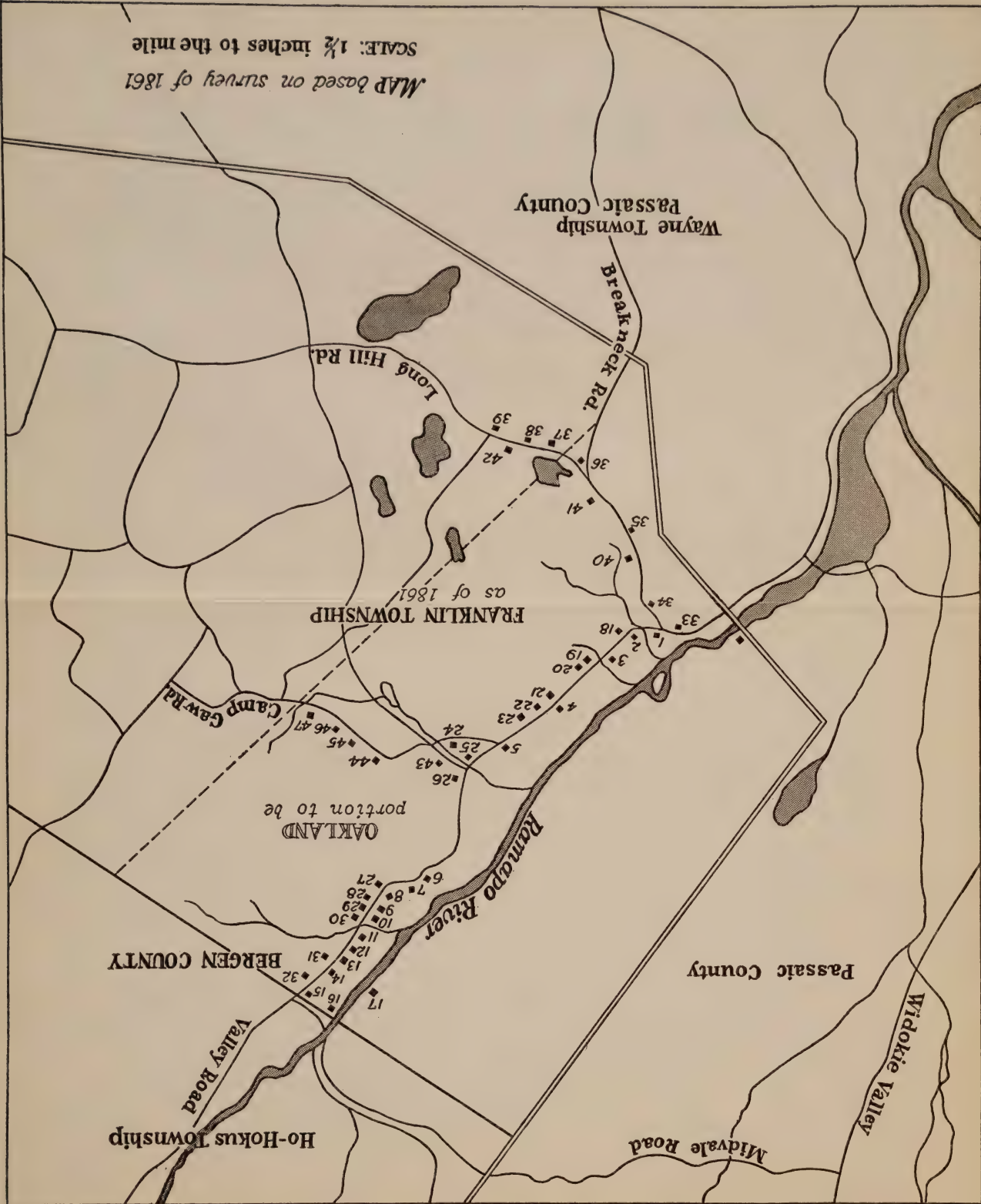
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PROPERTIES OF RESIDENT-OWNERS OF THE OAKLAND PORTION,  
FRANKLIN TOWNSHIP, BERGEN COUNTY—SURVEY OF 1861.

- From the foot of Oakland Avenue and  
continuing north, on the west side of  
the road:  
1. Ponds Church  
2. Graveyard  
3. S. P. Demarest  
4. J. J. Winter  
5. Wm. Van Blarcom  
6. J. P. Ramsey  
7. P. C. Bogart  
8. J. Fox  
9. A. G. Garrison  
10. C. Yeomans  
11. J. P. Smith  
12. Wm. Ackerman  
13. G. W. Steel  
14. Farmer's and Mechanics Hotel  
15. S. D. Bartholf  
To left on Midvale Rd.:  
(Glen Gray)  
16. A. Hopper
- From foot of Oakland Ave.  
north, on east side of road:  
17. S. J. Fox  
18. H. L. Spear  
19. D. J. Demarest  
20. S. D. Demarest  
21. Smith shop, J. Mandigo  
22. M. Ryerson  
23. C. Van Houten  
24. Wm. Van Blarcom  
25. Saw Mill  
Valley Rd. just above Page's Corner:  
26. Mrs. H. Van Houten  
27. A. G. Garrison  
28. J. A. Zabriskie  
29. BSS & Wheelwright  
30. A. P. Ackerman  
31. Wm. P. Van Blarcom  
32. A. J. Hopper
- From the foot of Long Hill Road, at  
Oakland Ave., south side of the road:  
33. A. Doty  
34. Parsonage  
35. M. Sterr  
36. H. B. Demarest  
37. J. Ackerman  
38. B. Bartholf  
39. W. Ackerman  
North side of Long Hill Rd., from foot:  
40. J. H. Spear  
41. H. Cummings  
42. A. Boyd  
Page's Hill—Camp Gaw Road, north  
side:  
43. C. Bellmer  
44. J. Wykoff  
45. H. B. Winters  
46. J. Post  
47. T. C. Post







ther excitement aroused people of The Ponds when it was announced that oil had been discovered in the Ramapo Valley, but exploratory drilling resulted only in disappointment.

The Civil War and the increasing industrialization of the times had shattered the valley's quiet agricultural way of life. In 1869 the tracks of the New Jersey Midland Railroad reached the town.

The first news of the railroad caused great excitement. A contemporary editorial in the *Paterson Press* said: "This is the age of the iron horse—a new and higher epoch in the 'age of iron' in which geologists tell us we live. Within a year or two neighboring valleys will resound with the snort of the iron horse that will speed in every direction between the towering hills that will catch up and repeat the shrill neigh of triumph."

Not everyone was enthusiastic. In describing a hunting trip taken by an Englishman and an American in 1830, Frank Forester said in his book, *Warwick Woodlands*, "A few miles farther yet, the road wheeled round . . . entering a defile through which the Ramapo, one of the loveliest streams eye ever looked upon, comes rippling with its crystal waters over bright pebbles, on its way to join the two kindred rivulets which form the fair Passaic. Throughout the whole of that defile, nothing can



possibly surpass the loveliness of nature." In a footnote later, he observes, "It is almost a painful task to read over and revise this chapter. The natural features of rock, wood and river have been so much altered by the march of improvement, Heaven save the mark!, that the traveler . . . will certainly not recognize the description of the vale of Ramapo,—the hill-sides all denuded of their leafy honors, the bright streams dammed by unsightly mounds and changed into foul stagnant pools, the snug country tavern deserted for a huge, hideous barnlike depot, and all the lovely sights and sweet harmonies of nature defaced and drowned by the deformities consequent on a railroad, by the disgusting roar and screech of the steam-engine."

Nevertheless, when the tracks reached The Ponds in March, 1869, the town celebrated. School was let out and about five hundred people gathered in front of the Van Blarcom Hotel, near the present station, and listened to rounds of oratory and the booming of cannon. Then the "enthusiastic celebrants" crowded into the flat cars for a free ride to Wyckoff and back. Speakers at the exercises included Ex-Governor Rodman M. Price, whose son was one of the engineers who built the road, Judge Aaron G. Garrison, Isaac Wortendyke, and Dr. William Colfax, a cousin of Vice-President Schuyler Colfax.

Along with the railroad came business and publicity. "P. Demarest has his new mills in running order and serves customers in double time and in a very satisfactory manner," said the *Bergen County Democrat* on February 23, 1887. The next year on February fifteenth, they burst into verse:

J. J. Fox makes his anvil ring by working the iron while  
it is hot.

S. W. Brooks, the wheelwright king, builds wagons and  
sleighs and paints to a dot.

The railroad, a cheaper and less arduous method of transporting farm and dairy products, opened new opportunities to the farmers and brought the outside world close to The Ponds for the first time. Farms lost their self-sufficiency as the men supplemented their incomes with other occupations. Abram Garrison's cidermill and sawmill on the Ramapo River, about a mile south of Darlington, was the largest of the river industries, and mills of various kinds clustered along every brook. On the Long Hill Brook alone there were six; Samuel P. Demarest's gristmill and sawmill, James Post's woolen mill, Zachariah Post's sawmill, and John Post's gristmill higher on the stream. Many of the mills prospered by cutting fuel for the railroad from the woodlands in the Ramapos.

The railroad not only changed The Ponds' way of

life, but its very name. Before the station was built, Mr. D. C. Bush, who with Aaron G. Garrison and C. A. Wortendyke had been instrumental in bringing the railroad to the town, sold tickets from a window of his home near the Oakland Avenue crossing. As a result, when the station was built it was commonly called Bushville. To avoid confusion, the townspeople decided to select an official name. Somehow, perhaps in enthusiasm for the new "iron age," they rejected the names their fathers had used. One group favored the name *Brae Cliff*, another favored *Scrub Oaks*, and a third recommended *Oakdale*. *Pleasant Valley* also had its supporters. Political opponents of Mr. Bush were of the opinion that he secretly favored continuing the use of *Bushville*. A spirited campaign was waged, and a town meeting was called at Henry Bush's store to decide the issue. D. C. Bush was not informed of the meeting until it was in progress, and when he arrived he found that the suggested names had been discarded in favor of *De Kalb*. No one present, however, was certain about the spelling. Mr. Bush offered *Oakland* as a compromise, and the name won by three votes. At that time only two other communities in the United States were named Oakland. Today there are more than thirty.

Oakland's industrial era continued into the early

twentieth century. In 1890 an English firm opened the American E. C. Powder Company, which later became the American E. C. and Schultze Company, on land at the end of Roanoke Avenue, or as old-timers call it, Powder Mill Lane. The company's tax payments were an important item in the community's budget, and Captain Albert W. Money, resident manager of the plant, was a conspicuous figure in Oakland. Two explosions, the first of which killed two workmen and the second seven, rocked the plant. "Scenes of greatest heroism lent a double interest to the dire disaster," said the *Paterson Guardian*.

The brooks and the river, in addition to being a source of industry and a pleasure to vacationers, have also brought catastrophe to the residents of Oakland from time to time. On March 2, 1902, the flood waters of the Ramapo were fourteen and a half feet above the normal level of the river. All of the bridges from Suffern to Pompton Lakes were swept away except for the Pleasureland Bridge, which did not receive the full force of the main current. The railroad trestle was washed out, and for many weeks Oakland was the last station on the line which could be reached directly from New York.

Mr. Henry Hopper tells of rowing the first boat



across the river during the flood in order to connect telegraph wires which had been carried away. He got halfway across with the wire unwinding behind his boat when the current began to sweep him downstream. Foresightedly, he had brought a clothesline weighted with a rock, and he threw it to men on the other bank who pulled him the rest of the way. Later he stretched a heavy rope across the river which he used as a towline to ferry people from one bank to the other. For three days this was the only way Oaklanders could reach Pompton Lakes. Mr. Hopper also tells of two horses which were caught in the flood in a barn near Wilkens brush factory. When rescuers opened the doors, both animals were swimming with their heads touching the barn rafters.

The brush factory, which employed about one hundred workers, was opened in 1894 by Ludo W. Wilkens in a building which had been used by the Demarest gristmill and then by A. D. Bogert's Wood-Type Manufacturing Company. Wilkens developed a world-wide business in hair and bristles for all kinds of brushes, but the plant closed in 1928. The building is now used as a recreation hall by Sandy Beach.

The Vernam Spring, as well as its stream, has been put to various commercial uses throughout the



years. At one time it was used as a bed for water-cress which was sold to florists, and in 1904, Mrs. Remington Vernam opened a small bottling plant. In 1906 she sold it to the Kanouse Water Company, which bottled and shipped water to all parts of the East. In the two-story Kanouse Water Company building along the Susquehanna near the entrance to Ramapo Park, "Bloodwine," an early soft drink, was manufactured. The building now houses Engineering Laboratories. For a time the spring was Oakland's water supply, and now it is used to raise goldfish.

The coming of electricity ended Oakland's pre-eminence in industry, which had always been based on the use of water power for manufacturing. The power line was energized on August 1, 1916, and by the end of the 1920's almost all industries had ceased operations. For a time the only one which continued was the Vervaet Woven Label Company, a business which employs about fifty jacquard workers to make hat, shirt, and clothing labels.

Farming too nearly disappeared as the young people left Oakland to work in towns for wages. For twenty years the population of Oakland remained almost static, no new houses were built, and the farmlands went back into brush and forest. During the 1940's several large tracts of land were sold

to developers, and Oakland became a commuting town. Young families with children began to settle in town and take an active part in community life. Most of the men work in New York or Paterson, returning to Oakland for evenings or weekends. A few are employed here. Plastics, precision tools, hats, and labels are manufactured in the valley, and cats, canaries, goldfish, shrubs, and trees are raised, but business confines itself mainly to services. There is no longer a single self-supporting farm within the borough limits.



The low-lying hills, bland and mild in silhouette, attest to the age of the Ramapos, which as young mountains, ages ago, could have been higher than the Rockies. This scene is near the Pond of the Raaten and not far off the course of the old Cannonball road. (*Photo—Bergen Evening Record*)



The Church of The Ponds received its name, not from the pond at its rear, but from the area known as "The Ponds," which extended in a chain up the length of Long Hill for nearly three miles.

Ponds Church as it is today





The Ponds Memorial Building, Oakland's community hall with auditorium, borough offices and police station, and a recreation center, is the town's effort to commemorate its famous Church of The Ponds. (*Photo—Bergen Evening Record*)

Oakland Grammar School, built in 1907, with a small north wing added twenty years later and a large structure added in 1950, now accommodates about 400 pupils. Close to the road in the southeast corner of the schoolyard are the foundation remains of Ivy Hall, Oakland's first community building. (*Photo—Bergen Evening Record*)







Residence of Mr. Jacob Walder on Long Hill Road, shown on the map of 1861 as the property of Adam Boyd. It is truly Dutch colonial, with many additions. This front view shows less than one third of the present structure. (*Photo—Bergen Evening Record*)

The J. Mandigo residence, near the location of his early “smith shop,” and now the home of Mr. Harold Johnson, a direct descendant. To the rear is a barn with timbers still in place after 200 years. (*Photo—Bergen Evening Record*)





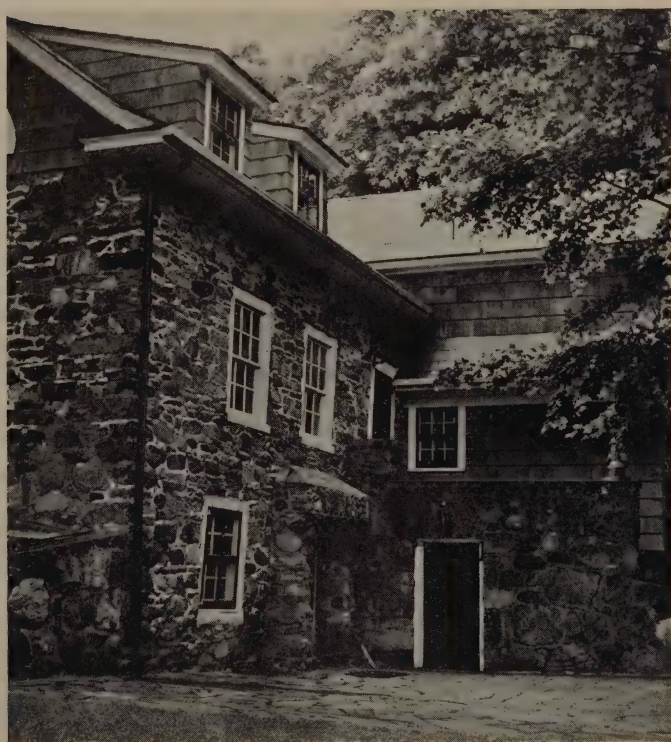


The Ackerman house, known to have been transferred from one Ackerman to another in 1795. In remodeling, the date 1747 was found scratched in the original plaster. More recently this home was owned by Miss Phyllis Page and is the present residence of Mr. Herbert M. Williams. (*Photo—Bergen Evening Record*)

On the west bank of the Ramapo, and very near the north boundary of our borough, is the S. J. Fox homestead, more recently the home of Ernest Truex, the actor, and for the last fifteen years the home of the dramatist Mr. Sidney Kingsley and his wife, who is Madge Evans. (*Photo—Bergen Evening Record*)







The home of Jacob and Jane Fox, shown on the map of 1861, but built a great many years before. For the last twenty years it has been the residence of Mr. and Mrs. Robert T. Sheldon. The stone work of the original Fox home has been left intact. (Photo—*Bergen Evening Record*)

## CHAPTER VIII



### *The Three R's and the Alphabet*

SCHOOL matters in Oakland have always been administered separately from town affairs. At first education came under the church's jurisdiction, and then under a committee of school trustees. Today the five members of the Board of Education are elected at special school elections held each February in the school. Their authority, within regulations imposed by the county and state, is absolute, and the school budget which they submit to the borough Council must be accepted and included in the town budget to be raised by general taxation.

The first record we have of education in The Ponds is in 1775 when the Englishman Rench taught in a building directly opposite old Ponds Church. The school was used for religious instruction on Sundays. Bergen County Dutch, a mixture

of Holland dialects with poor English and a few Indian phrases, was the language spoken in the homes of Yaupough and The Ponds until well into the nineteenth century. There were no textbook standards for the vernacular, and ways of speech were handed down orally from generation to generation. The church and the school tried to foster the use of a purer form of Dutch, and Rensch probably taught in both Dutch and English.

The first building which was used for school purposes alone was located at the corner of Allerman Road and Oakland Avenue. A crumbling mass of stones is all that is left of the crude one-room dwelling that served the community as a school for over fifty years. One of the classes was taught by a Miss Hering, for whose services each pupil paid three cents a day. Parents of the children took turns providing accommodations for the teacher.

From May to December, when the youngsters were needed at home to help with farm chores, the school was closed, but during December, January, and February it was not unusual to find parents attending along with their children. The schoolmaster then arranged his pupils in groups according to age and taught them separately.

The primitive school, erected with publicly subscribed funds, was typical of all of the early schools



of Bergen County. Benches were ranged along the windows where the light was best, and the stove or fireplace used wood donated by parents and neighbors. The teacher and the older boys chopped and carried the wood. If the fire went out, they fetched live coals from a neighbor's house to re-ignite it. Windows were covered with oilskin, and time was measured by watching the distance a shadow traveled to and from a "noon mark."

Facilities were as crude as the schoolhouse itself. Goose quills cost the pupils two cents and a "tempered" pen, five cents. Before slates were common equipment, younger children were taught to write by tracing letters with a stick in a sandbox. Textbooks were the Psalter, the Testament, the Catechism, and Sanders' *Speller and Reader*. Students were graded only on their ability to spell. Geography was taught from the teacher's personal knowledge, and arithmetic was confined to practical problems of buying and selling. Lessons were chanted, and the children while reciting toed a chalk line drawn across the floor. The first reading lesson began, "No man may put off the law of God." Schoolmasters were strict, and did not hesitate to rap miscreants over the knuckles with the butt end of a whalebone horse whip, or seat them on a backless bench with their hands clasped behind them.

Around the time of the Civil War another building was built about one hundred yards away on land donated by William P. Van Blarcom. There was a stipulation that the property revert to the Van Blarcom family should it cease to be used as a school, and in recent years the building was the home of one of his descendants. Here old-fashioned desks with built-in inkwells were used, and the ink was made from the juice of the pokeberry. Mrs. Thaddeus Garrison attended another school near Franklin Lake, which was probably the earliest school building in Franklin Township. There the benches were still placed around the walls, and the pupils had to turn around to write on the boards which served as desks. Miss Kate Ramsey recalls a school on the Valley Road which was somewhat more elaborate. Cross-stitched mottoes adorned the walls, and the oil lamps had frosted-glass shades. The basement of the two-story schoolhouse served the mountain farm people as an auxiliary church and social hall. Sunday afternoon church services were held there, and Christmas entertainments and minstrel shows added to the fun of the times. The proceeds of one minstrel show were used to buy a bell which summoned the children to school each day. Mrs. Amos W. Hopper, wife of the first mayor of Oakland, taught in this school.

In all of the schools, the most popular diversions during the 1800's were spelling bees and demonstrations of "mesmerism." Parents were invited to participate. Old residents recall that Aaron G. Garrison, who sometimes conducted the bees, once stumped the class with the word "bonnyclabber."

Education was not compulsory, and teachers were not required to furnish certificates or references to obtain appointment. They were accepted merely on their agreement to serve for whatever pay or accommodations were offered them. Salaries were generally fixed by three trustees chosen at a town meeting to provide for the salary and maintenance of a schoolmaster. Later the trustees were empowered to select school sites.

The people of Oakland felt that Franklin Township was unfair to this area in its distribution of school funds and the location of school buildings. Soon after the borough's separation from the township in 1902, steps were taken to establish a separate school district as well. Minutes of the September 15, 1902 Council meeting record the appointment of a committee to "entertain" the State Superintendent of Schools and an appropriation of \$15 to cover the expense. The meeting was successful, and on December 1, 1902, with the approval of the Superintendent and the State Board of Education, the

school became The Oakland Grammar School instead of Franklin Institute No. 1. The school archives contain the certifying document with its official seal, duly signed and attested.

All eight grades were still taught in the one-room school on Allerman Road. The school up the valley had been closed, and its furnishings were taken to Ramsey. Children who wished further education traveled to Hackensack to high school. Costs were paid by their parents until 1903, when the Board of Education ledgers show that public funds were used to pay the \$12 tuition per quarter. Later Oakland pupils went to Butler High School, where the tuition was \$10 per quarter, and now they attend Pompton Lakes High School, where the tuition is \$360 a year.

Soon after local people took over the management of school affairs, the one-room-school tradition ended. In 1904 the school was divided in two. The upper grades remained in the old school, and the primary classes were taught in Ivy Hall. In 1906 the Board began to plan for the construction of a new school, an ambitious undertaking which did not meet with unanimous public approval. Up to this time costs had been moderate. Teachers' salaries averaged about \$45 a month; total funds administered for the year 1903-1904 are recorded



as \$531.17, with a surplus balance of \$248.96. Two tons of coal cost \$12; the school clerk was paid \$23.09, which included the purchase of a record book. Later, another clerk gave his entire expenses for the year as \$3.08, his own services obviously being free. In 1906, the school register recorded forty pupils with an average attendance of thirty-one.

The old records preserve a letter dated April 18, 1907, from Charles H. Sheffield, president of the Board of Education, urging that an architect be retained at once so that the new building would be ready by the next fall. He recommended that an acre and a half of land fronting on Oakland Avenue be purchased from Martin Van Houten and added to the land already deeded to the Board so that the school would have frontage on the main street. He also promised that the costs of the building would be met by private subscription. The Board approved these recommendations.

Public opinion was divided, however, even among the Board members themselves. The first plan drawn up by the architect, estimated to cost \$18,000 including the price of the land, was voted down at a school election. A new plan at \$13,500 secured a majority vote. Meanwhile Board members resigned, new ones were appointed, and there

was much turmoil and discussion in the community.

Nevertheless, the new school was ready for occupancy in October, 1907. Its first principal was Arthur Frost. The entire cost of the building had been subscribed by substantial citizens who bought the \$500 bonds issued by the Board of Education. The building, the center section of the school still in use, contained four rooms with sliding doors which could be opened for assemblies and entertainments. Blackboards were placed on the doors; the desks were screwed to the floor and had handles by which they could be raised or lowered to fit the pupils. The coal furnace put in at that time proved to have such lasting qualities that it was still in use when it was replaced by an oil burner in 1950. A well provided water for drinking and washing, and there was no inside plumbing. Later on the New Jersey State Legislature, realizing that rural homeowners who had no bathrooms of their own were likely to be unsympathetic to such expenditures, passed a law which permitted Boards of Education to appropriate funds for this purpose without the vote of the people. After this inside toilet facilities were provided.

A wing was added to the school in 1927 for use as a kindergarten room. This addition cost \$11,000. One teacher still taught two grades in the same

classroom. The registration just before and during World War II averaged less than one hundred, and the graduating classes had only ten or fifteen pupils. With the increase of automobile traffic on the roads, a public bus was engaged to transport children, and later the school bought its own bus. It now operates two.

Henry Hopper, school janitor during this period, remembers two rather hair-raising episodes. Once it was necessary to wash a skunk out of the school basement with a garden hose, and another day Mr. Hopper's dog discovered a two-foot copperhead on the school stairs. Mr. Hopper is probably the man most closely associated with the school since its earliest existence. He completed his studies in the Allerman Road school in 1890, served as a member of the Board of Education for eight years, and later served as school district clerk, custodian of school funds, and finally as school janitor for twenty years.

The last change in the school plant occurred when another wing was added on the south, and the entire building was renovated at a cost of \$180,000 so that there was room for eight grades, a kindergarten, and a cafeteria. The building in its new form opened in October, 1950. The bumper crop of "war babies" and the increased development of Oakland made it necessary to add two

more classrooms in the cafeteria space during 1951. School registration for June, 1952, showed 338 pupils, with seventy-five more five-year-olds registered for the fall kindergarten. For the first time the Oakland Grammar School will find it necessary to operate double sessions in some of the upper grades.

The Parent-Teacher Association, an organization which now has about 250 fathers, mothers, teachers, and friends as members, has been active in school affairs since it was founded in 1927. The monthly meetings are designed to foster the welfare of the school child through better understanding between parents and teachers. The programs include a business meeting, a speaker or other educational feature, a visit to individual classrooms, and a social and refreshment period. A PTA lunchroom committee supervises and operates the school lunch program under the sponsorship of the Board of Education. In 1951-1952, 27,175 meals were served to a daily average of two hundred children. The expenses of the lunch program are borne by the children themselves, who pay \$1.00 a week, by aid from the New Jersey State Hot Lunch Program, and by the use of government surplus commodities. The PTA also sponsors the "summer round-up" and physical examination of children about to enter



school, the Christmas party, the school flower show, and "Field Day," a day of games and swimming which marks the end of the school year. Committees of mothers help the faculty with special events, and much hard work done by PTA members throughout the years has helped to make the school a real community project. The organization is affiliated with the national and state Parent-Teacher Associations, and its by-laws forbid its taking a part in political or civic matters other than those which affect the children of the town directly. Funds are raised at a yearly rummage sale, a sweet sale, and a plant sale.

The Oakland Military Academy, a private boarding school of about one hundred pupils, was founded in 1935 by John S. Sarcka. Its grounds cover one hundred acres, and the school emphasizes college preparatory courses, horsemanship, and athletic activities.

Another part of community education began during the early 1900's. Mrs. Louise Sheffield was the moving spirit behind the Oakland Library. For years funds were donated and raised by tag days, the library was located in private homes, and its stock of books came as gifts from personal bookshelves. A group of ardent volunteer workers, sometimes aided by librarians whose salaries ranged

from \$10 to \$15 a month, kept the library alive and growing. The first Library Board was formed in 1930, and the project was then adopted by the town. For the first time, it was given borough funds. Until it settled into the Oakland firehouse in 1939, the organization led a transient existence, moving from private home to vacant building to private home. It is now regularly supported by the borough Council, and it is open three times a week.

Oakland has had two ill-fated private educational ventures. For several years in the early 1920's there was a Catholic seminary on the estate established in the late 1890's by Edward D. Page near the present site of the Ramapo Mountain Lakes Clubhouse. The building was destroyed by fire in 1925, and the school was closed. In 1932 the ruined building and surrounding outbuildings were the scene of an attempt to set up the "Art Center of New Jersey." Madame Margaret Orlova, an actress and writer, and Madame Marguerite Sylva, an opera singer whose actual name was Smith, established the Sherwood Forest Friar Tuck Club. They hoped to open schools of dramatic art, lyric drama, dancing, and painting and felt sure that they would soon be the center of a colony of artists and writers. The opera *Carmen* was performed August 13, 1932, in English with the ruined house and black velvet

curtains as background. During the "*Toreador Song*" thunder rumbled and lightning flashed. The performance was not a financial success, and the whole project was abandoned. In 1934 the same estate was temporarily a government transient camp.

## CHAPTER IX



### *Local Government at Work*

OAKLAND became an independent borough linked to county and state governments by specified mutual services and responsibilities through a series of separations from parent governing areas. Each new division was the result of a wish for more complete self-government and a dissatisfaction with existing representation.

Bergen had already been designated a county, or judicial district, by the time Oakland was first settled, but it did not then include the Ramapo Valley, which was a part of New Barbadoes Township, Essex County. In 1710 New Barbadoes joined Bergen County. Franklin Township, an area which included present-day Hohokus, Franklin Lakes, Midland Park, Waldwick, Saddle River, Ridge-



wood, and Oakland, withdrew from New Barbadoes in 1772. The township is said to have been named in honor of William Franklin, natural son of Benjamin Franklin and the last governor of New Jersey appointed by the British.

For a long time only owners of one thousand acres could serve on the township committee, which was elected by "freeman voters" who owned one hundred acres or more. Elections were held every other spring in Wyckoff, and were the occasion of much spirited discussion. Township committee meetings were held at hotels in the various villages, and during the late nineteenth century Hafel's Hotel, now a part of the Oakland Military Academy, and the Crystal Lake Hotel on High Mountain Road were occasional meeting places. One of Oakland's civic-minded men, Aaron G. Garrison, was on the township committee before he became a judge of the Court of Common Pleas and County Collector of Bergen County.

Franklin Township leaned largely toward the Democratic party, as did most of Bergen County, until 1896 when Bryan and the silver question turned the people of Oakland and the township toward the Republican party. The Oakland Guards were organized to support McKinley, and in their natty blue uniforms with white trimmings they led

a torchlight parade from the railroad station to Ponds Church and back. The rally ended with speeches at the station, and true to Oakland tradition, refreshments for everyone were served. Politically Oakland continues to be mainly Republican, but an independent turn of mind permits most voters to "split tickets" when the occasion seems to them to demand it, particularly in local elections.

During the last half of the nineteenth century the people of Oakland became more and more dissatisfied with the township form of government. Some of the grievances concerned the township committee's administration of school and road funds, but mainly "we felt we had no voice in the government," says Mr. David C. Bush, an instrumental member of the group who helped Oakland to become an independent borough, and president of the first borough Council. "A group of us would get together and talk about it, but nobody knew just what to do to change things, and we were awfully green. We did write to the State Legislature, and we circulated petitions, although not everybody in town wanted to make a change. Some people were suspicious that we were looking for some political advantage." They were indeed "green" politically, for Mr. Bush tells of a vain trip

to Trenton to see members of the New Jersey Legislature, which was not in session that day.

Nevertheless the group, which also included Edward D. Page, John Ramsey, Albert McNomee, Martin Ryerson, Dr. Ezra W. Hamilton, and Andrew I. Spear, continued to work. They sought the advice of J. Willard DeYoe, a Paterson attorney, who advised them to have a survey made and a bill drawn up. This was presented to the Legislature by New Jersey Senator Edmund W. Wakelee, and it passed on April 8, 1902.

On May 13 of the same year a special election was called to elect Oakland's first Mayor and Council. Amos W. Hopper, a farmer, was elected Mayor and the Council members chosen were John Ramsey, a farmer; Dr. Ezra W. Hamilton, a physician; Edward D. Page, head of a New York mercantile house; Martin Ryerson, a bookkeeper; Albert T. McNomee, a storekeeper; and D. C. Bush, also a storekeeper. J. Willard DeYoe was appointed borough attorney at the first Council meeting, which was held on May 19, 1902, and Thaddeus A. Garrison the first borough clerk. The Council voted to pay its attorney \$35 a year and the clerk \$25. In August the first Board of Health was established, and at the end of the year the borough had a

treasury balance of \$4,777.48, a tax rate of \$1.79 per \$100, and a budget that read as follows:

Bond and interest due Franklin Township	\$1,113.56
County tax	1,142.46
School tax (Franklin Township)	431.61
School tax (State)	442.66
County Poor tax	65.16
Bounty and interest	85.14
Road repairs	700.00
General	300.00
	<hr/>
	\$4,280.59

Among the ordinances discussed at a Council meeting on July 8, 1903, was one "to provide for the destruction of minks and weasels within the borough of Oakland and providing for a bounty therefor." Originally the resolution was to include snakes as well, but the committee thought it unnecessary, "presuming it a natural act of man to voluntarily destroy them." The following year an ordinance was passed prohibiting "cattle, horses, mules, sheep, goats, and swine from pasturing and running at large in the streets or other public places in the borough of Oakland." Other early regulations forbade the Mayor to take part in any debate, or a Councilman to speak more than five minutes or



twice on the same subject without "the unanimous consent of the Council present." An ordinance passed in 1903 forbade snowplowing because bare ground ruined the runners of the farmers' sleds. Property owners who were unable to pay could "work out" their taxes at the rate of fifteen cents an hour, and the road department could hire a team of horses, a wagon, and a driver for \$3.50 for ten hours of work.

At first the Council met at Ivy Hall. Following a referendum in which the citizens voted forty-two to six to purchase the hall, the Council authorized the issuance of \$2,300 in bonds to pay for it. The building was used for municipal purposes until it was destroyed by fire in 1922. Then, as now, citizens of Oakland took a keen interest in town affairs and Council meetings were well attended. Oakland voters are believed to have set a state record in the primary elections of 1927 when 419 out of 426 registered voters appeared at the polls. After the destruction of Ivy Hall, elections and meetings were held in the firehouse until the completion of The Ponds Memorial Building in 1937.

The present Mayor and Council of Oakland, elected by approximately 1,200 registered voters, are assisted in their labors by a borough attorney, borough auditor, borough engineer, borough clerk,

water collector, tax collector, three tax assessors, a tax search officer, a building inspector, a plumbing inspector, and a road and water superintendent. The 1952 tax rate is \$6.30 per \$100, and the budget for the year totaled \$196,616.79; \$118,665.83 for school expenses, \$52,565.10 for town needs, and \$25,385.86 county taxes.

The Council operates as a series of interlocking committees. Each councilman is chairman of at least one committee, with two other councilmen serving as members of the committee. These include water, fire, police, roads, building and grounds, street lighting, finance, ordinance, real estate, and transportation. In addition, the needs of the town are watched over by various boards and departments which are appointed by the Mayor and Council. Important among these are the Planning Board, the Board of Adjustment, the Board of Health, the Board of Local Assistance, the Library Board, the Water Department, the Road Department, the Fire Department, and the Police Department.

The men and women who serve Oakland on its Council and Boards either donate their services entirely or receive so little compensation for their time and effort that their salaries barely cover their expenses. The results of their hours of work, often

at unfamiliar tasks which require reading and study, continually demonstrate the value of home rule as opposed to state or federal control of local matters. Most decisions are made within the borough, but the government of Oakland does operate within a framework of regulations laid down by national and state law. In 1951, when Arthur W. Vervaet was elected to the New Jersey House of Assembly, he gave Oakland its first local representation in state government.

### *Town Planning*

During the early days of Oakland little thought was given to town planning. Farmlands were divided according to the owners' needs, and surrounding fences kept cattle from straying into neighbors' pastures. Farm buildings and houses were built where it was convenient, gristmills and sawmills were established near water power, and the few stores in the village were centrally located.

As the town grew in population and the land was cut up and sold for homes, it became evident that some planning was needed. In 1930 in his inaugural address, Dr. Peter E. Demarest said that "the members of the Committee on Public Welfare have a most important task before them in zoning the borough." Late in the same year an ordinance divid-

ing the borough into primary residential, secondary residential, business, industrial, and agricultural zones was introduced and became law in January, 1931. The ordinance was designed to protect the interests of homeowners and to provide for the orderly growth of the borough. Zones are shown on the borough's land use map which has been revised by amendment as the need arose, as has the zoning law itself.

With the zoning ordinance came the Board of Adjustment, which was first appointed in February, 1931. When a strict adherence to zoning regulations would cause undue hardship in an individual case, the Board may recommend a variance or an exception to the Council, provided that the recommendation is not contrary to the best interests of the community as a whole.

In 1936, during the administration of Mayor C. F. MacEvoy, town planning was further advanced by the appointment of the first Planning Board. Its function, under the state enabling act, is to study borough conditions and make recommendations to the Council for the future development of Oakland. The Planning Board co-ordinated the community service map, which shows existing roads, water mains, and public buildings, with the land use map. The resulting master plan not only shows Oakland



as it is today, but also projects future roads, water mains, public buildings, parking areas, and educational and recreational facilities. A tentative master plan has been in existence for some time, and in 1952, during the administration of Mayor Arthur W. Vervaet, it was revised and, together with the borough's official map, was accepted by the Council.

The Planning Board also studies and approves developers' plans. No subdivision of land may be made within the borough without the approval of the Board, which must decide whether or not the development will fit into the pattern of land use and whether its road layout and drainage facilities will be adequate. Before final approval of the plan is given, the borough enters into a contract with the developer which embodies the particular changes in plan considered necessary. Minimum house and lot sizes are now controlled by borough ordinance, and the developers are required to lay their own water mains and build standard roads under the supervision of borough officials. The building code, which specifies structural safety measures but not details of workmanship, the sanitary code, and the plumbing code must be complied with before a certificate of occupancy can be issued.

The Board of Health, whose inspectors enforce the sanitary code and the plumbing code, is also

responsible for the control and prevention of disease, for garbage disposal, sewerage disposal, and the sanitation of public places in the borough of Oakland. The Board administers state health laws as well as local ordinances, and issues and keeps a record of births, marriages, and deaths. Oakland's public health nurse works in the community and also serves as school nurse.

### *Welfare*

Aid to needy members of the community has always been recognized as a function of borough government. Under state law such aid is administered by the Director of Welfare who is appointed by the Board of Local Assistance. Formerly the Mayor and Council appointed a poor master or overseer of the poor directly.

During the depression the number of families needing help was so great that it became necessary to secure additional funds from the state and federal governments, and for a time the Emergency Relief Administration of the state took over all the duties of allocating funds. Later the Federal Public Works Administration and the Works Projects Administration set up work projects in the borough, and at one time in 1937 about sixty families were supported by federal funds. During these years Sky Line Drive, East Oakland Avenue, and many of the

roads in Pleasureland were built, other roads within the borough were repaired, and The Ponds Memorial Building was built.

Concern for a neighbor's misfortune has been characteristic of Oakland since its earliest settlement. In spite of the recent rapid population increase which has dispelled much of the town's rural quality, the tradition still survives. In 1950 when a family of six lost its home and all of its possessions in a fire, so many duplicate contributions were offered that many had to be refused. The whole community still rallies its forces in a spontaneous and immediate outpouring of help when disaster strikes.

### *Civil Defense*

An efficient system of civil defense was set up in the borough during World War II. Airplane spotters and communications personnel were on duty twenty-four hours a day, a motor corps was ready for any emergency, and medical and food supplies were kept available in defense headquarters in the basement of The Ponds Memorial Building. All the work was done by volunteers who were trained to safeguard the people of Oakland in the event of an air raid or invasion.

In the fall of 1950, in the administration of Mayor Charles T. Moog, the international situation again

warranted establishing a civil defense council. A survey was made to determine the number of evacuees the town could accommodate in case of an air raid in a nearby city, and a community feeding station was established in the school, with reserve food and medical supplies and stretchers kept on hand. Numerous air-raid wardens were appointed, and a communications system which is in direct contact with the civil defense headquarters of the state was set up in the police station. Classes in first aid have been held, and auxiliary police and members of the fire department have been given special training.

### *Water Department*

In the early days of Oakland each householder secured drinking water by digging his own well or piping water from springs in the hills east of Oakland, sometimes supplying a few of his neighbors as well as his own family. Water was needed for horses and cattle, and besides private watering troughs, there were public troughs in the borough square, near old Ponds Church, up the Valley Road, and at various other places in the borough.

Inconvenience and fire hazard started townspeople talking about the need for a municipal water supply many years before it was established.



Methods suggested ranged from running a pipeline from Ramapo Lake to constructing a large reservoir in the mountains and "ramming" the water from the Ramapo River into it in order to supply the borough with water by gravity. The whole discussion nearly became academic in the 1920's when the city of Bayonne decided to take over the Ramapo Valley as a watershed and reservoir for its own use. Engineers were making test drills at Mart's Rock when a court stop order was obtained by indignant residents.

Action on a municipal water supply was taken in 1932 during the administration of Mayor Peter E. Demarest. Two wells were drilled and equipped with turbine pumps, two storage tanks with a capacity of 250,000 gallons were installed, and about eight miles of six- and eight-inch mains were laid. The system was financed by a bond issue of \$115,000 and the cost of maintaining it was a burden for a time. It has proved to be a farsighted move, however, which permits taxpayers to enjoy the benefits of tested drinking water and the protection of fire hydrants throughout the borough. Water is tested every three months, and there are eighty fire hydrants which are painted distinctive colors to define their pressure and volume to the fire department. A system has been worked out which makes it possible

for the fire department to pump from low- and high-pressure hydrants simultaneously so that almost every locality has maximum fire protection.

During 1936 the two drilled wells began to fail because of sedimentation, and Oakland was threatened with a serious water famine. To avert this, the water system was connected to Vernam Spring, which was owned by Clifford F. MacEvoy, who was then mayor. The use of the spring continued until 1942 when Mayor Gerard Grootendorst had the old wells retested. One was returned to use, along with a new test well near it which is about half the depth of the old one and taps water at a new level. By 1948 it became apparent that further supplies of water were needed, and well number three was drilled and put into operation, followed in 1950 by well number four, which opened the Martin Bush Field, an expandable well field located between the borough's recreation field and the Ramapo River. The borough now has about twenty-six miles of water mains serving eight hundred acres of land and a daily potential water supply of 600,000 gallons a day from its present wells.

### *Road Department*

Although Oakland's roads are supervised by a separate council committee, the road superintendent

and the road department's personnel work on both the borough's roads and water system. There are twenty-four miles of improved borough roads, four miles of dirt roads and rights-of-way other than private dirt roads, and seven miles of county roads. In general the department employs two workers in addition to the superintendent for road maintenance and snow removal. Special projects, such as road resurfacing, are let out by contract to the lowest bidder.

Originally, as described earlier, Oakland's main roads were Indian trails. It is believed that the Valley Road was improved by the Continental Army for the use of its troops. For many years two alternate roads to Suffern besides the Valley Road existed, Cannonball Road along the top of the Ramapos, and another road along the west bank of the Ramapo River.

When Oakland was separated from Franklin Township, the town assumed the burden of the bonds issued for the construction of local roads. Later, during Mayor A. Hobart Walton's administration, the county took over and resurfaced Route 202, Franklin Avenue, and Ponds Road, much to the relief of the local taxpayers.

The concrete section of West Oakland Avenue was built in the early 1930's, and the final section

which connected it with Colfax Avenue was completed, with the aid of state funds, in 1949. WPA road construction has been described elsewhere, as have the regulations which apply to the construction of roads in developments. It is the borough's intention that a policy of road maintenance and improvement be followed which is equitable and just to all residents.

### *Fire Department*

On an early evening in November, 1903, Oakland was startled by the cry, "Calder's barn is on fire!" The building on the knoll behind what is now the Oakland Military Academy was ablaze, and the town assembled in haste to save the horses and forty blooded cows stabled there. In spite of their efforts, two heifers died in the fire, and the surrounding buildings would have been destroyed had not hard work and bucket brigades saved them. It was the worst fire Oakland had ever seen, and townspeople suddenly realized that they needed a fire department.

However, six years elapsed before a fire company was formed. On June 10, 1909, in the administration of Mayor Amos W. Hopper, a meeting was held in Ivy Hall to organize a volunteer company. Ludo W. Wilkens was elected the first chief. The company



raised \$210 and purchased a chemical tank on wheels, and two iron locomotive rings were set on posts in opposite parts of the borough to serve as fire alarms. The company became Oakland's official fire department by ordinance in December, 1911. The previous year a committee of firemen had been appointed to supervise the construction of a firehouse on a lot purchased by the fire company. The building was paid for by the borough, and on New Year's Day, 1912, Edward D. Page, Oakland's second mayor, officially received the deed to the firehouse property.

Soon after this a ladies' auxiliary was organized and began to give clam chowder suppers and other social affairs to raise money for the department. A large bell was purchased, and it was planned to hang it in a belfry on the firehouse for use as an alarm. Its 1,280 pounds were too heavy for safety, however, so it was set in a frame on land to the north of the Oakland Avenue railroad crossing. By 1936 the posts which supported it had rotted, and it toppled over. The bell was removed to the grounds of The Ponds Memorial Building where it lay until 1952 when fire department volunteers enclosed it in a housing as a part of the borough's anniversary celebration.

During its early years the fire company was seri-

ously handicapped by lack of equipment. With limited personnel and only a small chemical tank and a few extinguishers as equipment, some disasters were inevitable. The worst of these occurred in 1916 when the barns of Charles H. Sheffield and Edward D. Page caught fire simultaneously, and both were destroyed. In 1925 the department petitioned the borough for a motor truck with a pumper attached, and an electric siren was installed on top of the firehouse. In 1925, also, the Mayor and Council doubled the size of the firehouse, and the second floor was used as a borough meeting place.

The thirty-five members of the fire department now operate two trucks and an emergency truck which carries a resuscitator, air packs, and searchlights. A new alarm system with three auxiliary sirens in various parts of the borough was recently installed. Since 1904 fire wardens have handled forest and field fires, but the department assists them and does much preventive work in woodland areas.

Social activities and participation in firemen's parades enliven the routine of fire drills and attendance at fire schools for volunteers, who, day or night, fly to the firehouse at the first sound of the siren. For this service, freely given, they deserve unlimited credit.

## *Police Department*

On May 29, 1902, the newly formed Oakland Council set up its first machinery for law enforcement when it named two marshals, each of whom was paid \$12.50 a year "together with fees," which they, unlike police officers, were permitted to accept for such duties as process serving. Until 1925 these marshals and their successors were the sole law-enforcement officers of the borough. Later the pay, with only one marshal serving, was increased to \$50 a year and then to \$75.

The marshal's traffic problems were somewhat different from those of today's police department. In 1902 the borough did pass a speed limit of twelve miles an hour for the rare automobile which came within its borders, but since the early marshal traveled about his duties on foot or in his own horse and wagon he would have had difficulty in enforcing the rule. In 1911 the borough provided him with a bicycle which was used until 1921 when the first motorcycle was purchased. Aaron G. Henion, one of the first marshals, is said to have used either the borough bicycle or one of his own in an ingenious manner. When a passing motorist appeared to be speeding and failed to heed his motion to "pull over," Henion would hurl the bicycle in the car's

path. Unable to do anything but stop, the driver would find himself haled into court at once, charged with both speeding and evading arrest.

In 1925 the present police department was formed with the passage of an ordinance on August thirteenth. The duties of the department were defined, and certain details of conduct were required of the police officers. No one, the ordinance said, "shall accept any gratuity, reward or gift; directly or indirectly, or any drink or eatables of any description." The officers were also instructed to carry a small book in which they must enter "all matters coming to their attention" and later "transcribe them into a permanent record." The marshals' jurisdiction had ended, and no more were appointed.

The police headquarters is now located in a wing of The Ponds Memorial Building, and the seldom-used jail, a two-cell steel and brick cage, is in the basement of the firehouse. Oakland's police force at present consists of a chief and a sergeant who work as full-time officers on alternate shifts. In addition the borough is served by three part-time officers and sixteen special officers. A three-way radio service with Pompton Lakes as area headquarters is maintained, and the borough is patrolled at intervals by officers of the New Jersey State Police and the Bergen County Police.



## *Courts*

After its incorporation as a borough, Oakland had the legal right to appoint a recorder and establish a local court. Citizens must have been fairly law-abiding since the Mayor and Council felt it unnecessary to do so for some time. Minor matters were heard by the Mayor's court. One of the earliest cases involved a man from Paterson who drove a stolen horse to death. Mayor Edward D. Page ordered the man held, and he was sentenced in the county court to six months in jail and \$100 fine.

In 1919 Judge William Harrison Rogers, an elected Justice of the Peace, held court. Most of the cases heard before the revision of the State Constitution in 1948 consisted of violations of the state motor vehicle laws or violations of local ordinances. The court's jurisdiction is now greatly expanded, and it hears minor violations of the criminal law as well. A part of the judicial system of the state, the municipal court is supervised closely by the New Jersey Supreme Court, to which it submits a weekly report.

In the early days, it paid the presiding magistrate to find the defendant guilty, since he collected the fines and costs of court himself. The magistrate's salary is now paid by the borough, and fines are

allocated to the different departments of the state and county according to statute. Civil cases are not heard in Oakland, and the borough receives only court costs for traffic violations.

### *Communications:*

#### THE OAKLAND POST OFFICE

Until January 15, 1872, the mail for residents of Oakland was delivered to various stores in Paterson and was only picked up when someone from town went to the city to market. On that date, however, Jacob A. Terhune was appointed Oakland's first postmaster. Mr. Terhune was a Republican and his father-in-law, Mr. D. C. Bush, Sr., who actually served as postmaster, was a Democrat. Because the national administration was Republican he could not be appointed, so Mr. Terhune sent his name in to Washington instead. Favoritism toward members of one's own political party apparently is not limited to twentieth-century politicians, nor is a certain amount of understandable family connivance! At first the post office was located in the depot, then in D. C. Bush's store, and in later years it has moved from one side of Oakland's main street to the other, always remaining in the central shopping district.

For thirty-four years Steve Jackson, the rural

free delivery carrier, was one of the town's most familiar and helpful personalities. First in a horse and wagon or sleigh, according to the season, later in a Model T Ford and eventually in a new-model automobile, Steve Jackson delivered the mail in all sorts of weather and helped pedestrians and motorists who were in need of assistance. Faithful to the traditions of the postal service, Steve Jackson delivered mail when the river rose up to the hubs of his wagon wheels, floundered through blizzards, and more than once stayed in his vehicle all night if he was stalled or unable to get through, since he would not let the mail remain ungarded.

The local post office, now in the second-class category, operates directly under the supervision of the postal department of the United States Government. Its postmaster and four employees are subject to civil service, and, except for the postmaster who is salaried, are paid an hourly rate. Post-office revenue, which determines the number of employees and the hours they work, and thus the service the post office can give, is in a definite ratio to the amount of stamp sales made each year. Besides stamps, the post office also sells savings bonds, revenue stamps, and money orders. There are two outgoing and three incoming posts as well as extra deliveries to and from nearby towns each day.

## TELEPHONE SERVICE

The first two telephones in Oakland were installed in D. C. Bush's store and home about 1900. For many years the telephone company awarded a free telephone to the borough for each one hundred telephones which were subscribed within its limits.

Mrs. Lillian Cummins, operator of Oakland's telephone exchange from 1912 to 1930 came to Oakland as a young widow with three children to support. The telephone switchboard was located in Mrs. Cummins' home, and she soon made herself a vital part of the community through her interest in every phase of its activities. She became far more than a voice saying "Number, please," and she is warmly remembered by older residents. At that time Oaklanders seldom bothered to ask for a number, but simply said that they wished to speak to "John or Mary Smith." Mrs. Cummins was a friend and motherly adviser to most of Oakland. She helped to solve many a minor emergency, from how to cure a baby's colic or cook a stew to locating someone who was needed in a hurry. Soon after Mrs. Cummins retired, Oakland's personal telephone service was replaced by a dial system which originates in Pompton Lakes.



## CHAPTER X



### *Summer, Sundays and Holidays*

OAKLAND'S hills and lakes and the Ramapo River have always attracted family vacationers, some of whom have stayed to become summer or year-round residents. During the late 1800's and 1900's several small hotels drew summer visitors from New York and other cities. Brookside Inn, the Calderwood, and Lilac Manor, which was briefly a sanitarium, were among those that prospered. There were also a number of boarding houses famous for their tables and their country dishes which drew many visitors year after year. Since the early 1920's small summer bungalows have clustered along the Ramapo in West Oakland and Pleasureland, and several beaches provide a day of sun and swimming for city dwellers. The river is known to trout fishermen for many miles around, and on the opening

day of the season its banks are crowded with cars. During game season red-capped hunters carry shot-guns and shell bags through the woods and fields, looking for deer, partridges, pheasants, wild ducks, rabbits, and squirrels.

The mountains have attracted boy scout camps and at Camp Tamarack, Camp Todd, and Camp Glen Gray scouts from urban centers come to learn the skills and joys of life in the woods. At least one development lures families from the cities because of its hilly terrain and the pleasures to be enjoyed at its community lake and pool.

Ramapo Lake, which lies cupped in the topmost hills of Oakland, has attracted sportsmen since the earliest days of settlement. The Dutch are said to have called the lake Rätten Pond because of the many muskrats who made it their home and eventually the name was corrupted to Rotten Pond. Another theory is that the lake was once used for the "retting" or soaking of flax, to loosen the textile fiber from the woody part of the stalk before the plant was spread in the sun to bleach and dry. Wild flax in the neighborhood lends some credence to this theory, and the transition from "retting pond" to "rotten pond" is an easy one. An old story of the lake tells of two outlanders who bamboozled a nearby sheriff into buying a worthless silver mine

on its shores. They bought and dumped a load of high-quality silver ore into an excavation which they had found unproductive, and offered some of it to the sheriff to be assayed. The sheriff swallowed the bait, and by the time he discovered the deception, the two "prospectors" were gone. Fishermen today claim that this spot is the home of the largest bass.

For many years villagers felt no need of an organized program of recreation for themselves or their children because of the natural advantages of the countryside and the time-consuming demands of farm life. Boys were busy fishing and trapping, girls learned to swim and skate, and there were always many farm and household chores to perform. Oakland's buzzing social and civic life and church affairs kept their elders occupied. But as the town grew more suburban, few families raised their own food supplies, new families moved in, and children grew unaccustomed to self-directed country pleasures. Bit by bit most of the river area was taken over by commercial beaches and many of the woods and fields gave way to subdivisions and homes. The need for supervised recreational facilities began to be felt.

During the administration of Mayor C. F. MacEvoy, community effort as well as WPA funds

built The Ponds Memorial Building. Benefits of various kinds were held to equip the stage and to provide bowling alleys and kitchen equipment, and voluntary contributions furnished chairs for the auditorium. Equipment and hours of volunteer labor were contributed by officials and townspeople. The stone façade of The Ponds Memorial Building, which is patterned after the church of 1829 and contains stones from this building and the earlier hexagonal church, was built in the same manner as its parent buildings. A group of Oakland citizens dug foundations and laid both the old and new stones in their free time.

This has become the "community building" and is the center of Oakland's civic, political, and recreational life. Council meetings, young people's activities, and civic groups use the auditorium; community suppers are served from the basement kitchen; bowling leagues use the two bowling alleys; and the school and recreation program use the stage and auditorium. Literally every organization in town uses the building for some activity, and it is now in such demand that it is difficult to secure a "date." The rear ell houses the borough office and the police station. In the front vestibule stands one of the pews from the old church, the wooden frame of the old organ, and an oil painting of old Ponds



Church donated in memory of Clarence Skutt, well-loved principal of the Oakland Grammar School for many years.

During the same administration, twenty-six acres of land surrounding the school and the community building were purchased by the borough for a future recreation park, and a three-man board was set up to administer borough property and to provide social and recreational activities. In the years that followed, the board became inactive and was abolished.

During World War II, when many mothers worked in war plants, the Mayor and Council authorized a recreation program to care for their children during vacation months. The program operated for two seasons under a paid director and a committee of volunteers. A few years after the war ended, the need for some form of supervised recreation was again agitated by a now defunct organization, the Oakland Taxpayers Association. Their officials secured an appropriation from the borough Council, but apparently they could never agree on how best to use it, and the money was never spent.

Further steps toward community recreation were taken in 1951 when a small group of people organized the Oakland Recreation Committee, which is elected at open meetings held for that purpose. Its

funds are raised by scrap drives, direct appeal, and community events which are themselves recreation. In the two years of its existence the Committee has concentrated on improvement of the land behind The Ponds Memorial Building and the school, both through physical labor and the expenditure of its own funds and those allocated to that purpose by the borough Council. The recreation field now includes a softball and hardball diamond, volleyball, badminton and horseshoe pitching courts, a picnic and arts and crafts area, a boxing arena, and waterfront facilities for swimmers. A small house on the field provides shower and dressing-room facilities for boys and girls and storage space for equipment.

For two successive summers the Committee has provided a supervised six-week summer program for children which includes swimming, baseball, arts and crafts, dancing, and many other sports and games, as well as evening square dances and movies for adults. The Recreation Committee also sponsors many of the youth activities in town.

## CHAPTER XI



### *"Something Going On All the Time"*

OAKLAND has apparently always been a busy place, despite a vaguely sleepy appearance which the town preserved until the 1940's. Mrs. Thaddeus Garrison, recalling the days of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, says that "there was something going on all the time." Church socials, picnics, boating parties, kaffee klatches, and sleigh rides were frequent, and whenever a new house went up, the townsfolk held a dance as soon as the floor was laid. Barney Van Cleef, a Negro fiddler, provided music and called the steps for the square dances and the vasoviana. After sleigh rides there were supper parties, and in summer a carnival was held on the river with Japanese lanterns decorating the shore and the boats.

Oaklanders have never needed a special event

to have a celebration, but each of these has been marked with verve. The party held in conjunction with the arrival of the railroad has already been described, and the coming of electricity to Oakland in 1916 elicited almost as much enthusiasm.

Another festive occasion was the dedication of The Ponds Memorial Building in July, 1937. Music, speeches, a pageant, and a community supper made the occasion gay. This year, in 1952, the community has turned out for a series of celebrations in connection with the fiftieth anniversary of Oakland's incorporation as a borough. The re-enactment of the first council meeting, an exhibition of fireworks, various events in honor of the fiftieth year of local autonomy, and the weekend long exhibit, historic pilgrimage and community supper have all attracted the town's interest.

Church and organization anniversaries are continually being celebrated with dinners, parties, and special programs. The year's calendar is dotted with community events, especially at Christmas time when each organization tries to outdo all the others in providing a good time for both the children and grownups. Dances, dinners, luncheons, flower shows, bazaars, rummage sales, and benefit performances of various kinds are held with regularity. Somehow or other, people also find time to do a



good deal of private entertaining at cocktails, luncheon-bridges, and dinner parties.

Much of this social whirl is not so frivolous as it may appear. Louis Gallantiere in his portrait, *America Today*, says of Americans that "we are such joiners of committees, clubs, lodges, associations, reading circles, 'do good' groups as the world has never before seen," and he might have been describing Oakland, which is, if anything, overorganized.

Numerous groups center at the church: the Ladies' Aid Society, the oldest organization, founded in 1913, the Fortnighters Club, and various children's groups. The Volunteer Fire Department and its Ladies Auxiliary exist for a serious purpose and combine business with pleasure as do the American Legion, the Rotary Club, the Chamber of Commerce, the Ramapo Mountain Lakes Property Owners' Association, the Oakland Heights Community Association, and the West Oakland Taxpayers' Association. All serve the community as well as their own particular interests. Many organizations focus their interest and activities on the children of Oakland: notably the Parent-Teacher Association, the Girl and Boy Scout Troops, the Cub Scouts, the Brownies, and the HEP Y-Teen Club. Political activities come under the aegis of the Republican and Democratic Clubs, and the

town has had several civic forums and a taxpayers' league which have fallen by the wayside. The newly organized Oakland Garden Club fosters its members' interest in gardening and also helps to beautify the community.

The enthusiasm and energy of Oakland's organizations could be seen in a long glance on May 30, 1952 at the annual Memorial Day parade which the American Legion sponsors in memory of the borough's war dead. Assembled in the square before the war memorial were the Grand Marshal, James J. Hodgson, a veteran of the Spanish-American War, the Mayor and Council, the Post Commander and the Chaplain of the American Legion, and representatives of the Gold Star Mothers and the organizations of Oakland bearing wreaths to be placed upon the Memorial Stone. Members of the Garden Club also carried bouquets to decorate the war graves in Ponds Cemetery. Uniformed Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, Cubs, and Brownies were massed behind their banners, and the Volunteer Fire Department and Ladies' Auxiliary stood trim in their blue uniforms. Behind banners denoting their clubs were members of Oakland's civic groups, a little uneasy in their civilian clothes, but proud of being part of the parade. The olive-drab uniforms of the Oakland Military Academy Band and Guard

lent a somber note which harmonized with the Army, Navy, and Marine Corps uniforms of the veterans of the Color Guard.

Along the curb, wide-eyed and waving small flags, were the babies and small boys and girls who were still too little to be Cubs and Brownies, accompanied by grandmothers and grandfathers old enough to enjoy earned leisure. Under a sunny sky in the borough square it was possible to feel great pride in the men and women who have served Oakland well in time of war, and great pride in the men and women who serve Oakland well in time of peace, and raise their children to do the same.

## CHAPTER XII



### *Oakland Today and Tomorrow*

OAKLAND has come to the end of an era. No longer a small rural community, the town still has many acres of unused land and faces continued expansion as transportation improves and business and industry move out from urban centers.

Change is not new to the valley. From agriculture Oakland shifted to light industry and later became a small residential community. But during the years of these transitions, Oakland was still a unified and homogeneous town. Most residents were descendants of early Dutch settlers, and civic and social activities revolved around the church.

In the early 1920's when West Oakland and Pleasureland were developed, the town's racial and religious character began to be diversified. In the 1940's and 1950's other developments drew new



residents whose family traditions derive from a wide variety of European cultures.

At first the newcomers and the oldtimers viewed each other with considerable suspicion. Oakland has been accused of being an unfriendly town, and while this is not accurate, it is true that townspeople do not immediately urge a newcomer to become a vital part of community life. Some of the residents of new developments gave Oakland good reason, at first, to believe that they would not easily assimilate the values and traditions of the town. Offending by overenthusiastic vacationing or by excessive demands on a small town's limited budget and services, the former city dwellers further alienated townspeople by organizing associations which seemed to be pressure groups intent on providing benefits for their own area at the expense of the town as a whole.

This unfortunate division of sympathies and interests continued for some time, to Oakland's great disadvantage. Now, however, the various parts of Oakland are once again drawing together. Through work and a sense of identification with the town, the newcomers have made themselves more and more important to Oakland's community life. The official organizations of the developments have begun to consider their problems in terms of the general

welfare, and individual members of all of the subdivisions have joined church organizations, the Fire Department, the PTA, the Civil Defense Council, the Recreation Committee, and the political and civic clubs. Some new residents serve on the borough Council, others on the town's official boards.

Encouraging as this new trend toward unity is, it is still only partially realized. To be ready to make the crucial decisions of the next few years, Oakland must return to the traditions of its early settlers and become integrated once again. Its citizens must work constructively, critically, and co-operatively together, and the town must become as free from individual inertia and selfish dissent as possible.

A community the size of Oakland cannot completely determine its own destiny because it is influenced by the economic, social, and political problems of the large areas surrounding it. However, the thorough and cautious study of such complex subjects as sewerage, drainage, transportation, flood control, and traffic control will enable the town to benefit from county and state programs, and, to a large degree, to control its own development.

It is a constant temptation to the borough Council and the various governing boards to limit their actions to administration and the improvement of existing conditions. Such decisions seem deceptively

easy. However, what may be the answer to today's problem can create a larger problem tomorrow, or can steer the town's development in a direction which is both unintended and undesirable. The fact that very few such oversimplified decisions have been enacted into law is a tribute to the intelligence of Oakland's government, but long-range planning, to be the effective expression of the community's intentions, will require the thought and study of the townspeople as well as of the officials.

To be realistic, such planning must be based on actualities. The prosperity of Oakland has always been the result of sensible use of the town's natural resources, although the ways of use have varied under different economic conditions. The water power which once made Oakland a center for industry can no longer compete with electricity, but the river, brooks, and lakes now provide recreation and relaxation for residents and visitors. The fertile valley, close to large cities, no longer attracts farmers who can ship produce long distances quickly and cheaply by truck and rail, but it allows parents and children to grow vegetables and flowers for their own enjoyment. The hills, whose forests once provided fuel for the railroad and the charcoal burners, now give pleasure as home sites and camping areas.

The entire northwest area of Bergen County is in

a period of expansion. When Highway S-4-B is completed, fast, efficient transportation to New York and other cities will force development of one kind or another upon us. Nevertheless, we can still determine whether or not the valley will continue to be a restful, healthy, and economical place in which to live.

More and more we have come to realize that the ownership of land is a responsibility not only toward one's own family and neighbors, but also toward future generations. In a recent decision, Chief Justice Arthur T. Vanderbilt of the New Jersey Supreme Court upheld the right of local governments to restrict land use for the community's protection. To be effective, such restrictions must be considered and planned now before the pressure of events thrusts a too hasty decision upon us. This type of planning can also anticipate the town's future needs, provide space for them, and save taxpayers exorbitant sums later when land prices are high. S-4-B itself can become either a nightmare of hot-dog stands, signs, and garages, or a beautified highway which will encourage desirable development.

In general, there are two choices open to residents of Oakland. The town can remain almost entirely residential, or it can deliberately court some



light industry and business. A town which is mainly residential is of necessity fairly expensive to live in, since all education costs and services must be supported by taxing the individual homeowner. To some extent, this burden can be minimized by ordinances requiring large lot sizes and by other measures which will prevent the population from becoming too dense. A residential town has certain advantages in ways of living which citizens may wish to preserve in spite of the additional cost.

Residents may decide, however, that some taxable light industries and businesses which would help to support schooling and services would be desirable additions to our community life and economy. With proper control, the current trend toward decentralization could result in several handsome plants and office buildings in Oakland, located where they would blend attractively into a primarily residential town. Whatever the decision, it should be made by the community as a whole.

In the past, people who have been dissatisfied with the town's administration or planning for the future have sometimes considered it necessary to form a new organization to express their point of view. None of these groups survived for long, and a probable reason for their early demise is that the structure of the town government is set up to be sen-

sitive and responsive to the wishes of the people. Oakland's officials have already taken wise steps towards safeguarding the town's future, and Council meetings, Board of Education meetings, and the meetings of the various official boards are open to the public except for an occasional necessary executive session. Members welcome constructive criticism and suggestions and believe that a more active participation in the various functions of government can and will result in wiser administration of the town's affairs.

Vigilance is the price of liberty, and it is also the price of good local government. If we are to find a workable compromise between the enjoyment of country living and the demands of the industrial age, our planning must be a continuous process of study and action. In the end, the way Oakland will develop will be the result of our own decision or lack of decision. If we can maintain the traditions and the values of the early days of The Ponds and Yau-pough, Oakland fifty years from now will still be "the valley of homes."

*The young men and women of Oakland have always rallied to the defense of our country during times of war. They have served in many capacities, and the people of the town have felt gratitude and respect toward all of them.*

*Deepest in our memories, however, are those who gave their lives in the defense of their country. This book would be incomplete if their names were not included.*

## WORLD WAR I

James Julius Neilson  
John Goodman

## WORLD WAR II

Gale H. McNamee  
Christian Bannehr  
Henry Winters  
Charles Winters  
Daniel Ferrell





## *The Mayors of Oakland*

Amos W. Hopper	1902-1909
Edward D. Page	1910-1911
Martin Ryerson	1912-1913
A. Hobart Walton	1914-1929
Dr. Peter E. Demarest	1930-1933
Arthur F. Frost	1934-1935
Clifford F. MacEvoy	1936-1942
Gerard Grootendorst	1943-1947
Charles T. Moog	1948-1951
Arthur W. Vervaet	1952-



## *The Fiftieth Anniversary Committee*

HARRY GALE McNOMEE, Oakland Rotary Club and Bergen  
County Historical Society, *Chairman*

### HONORARY MEMBERS

HON. MARTIN RYERSON	HON. ARTHUR F. FROST
HON. CLIFFORD F. MACÉVOY	HON. GERARD GROOTENDORST
HON. CHARLES T. MOOG	HON. ARTHUR W. VERVAET

### ORGANIZATION MEMBERS

Board of Education	Wendell B. Kern
	T. Emmett Bauer
Borough Council	William A. Richardson
Ponds Church Consistory	Louis Reyenga, Elder
Ponds Church Sunday School	Irving S. Bush, Superintendent
Parent-Teacher Association	Mrs. J. E. Walker, President
	Mrs. Warren Gabler
Oakland Fire Department	Lester W. Marion, Chief
	Al Perrin, President
Ladies Auxiliary, O. F. D.	Mrs. Harold J. Munn, President
	Miss Hazel Sanders
Oakland American Legion Post	Edgar A. Powell, Commander
	A. Edward Smith, Historian
Oakland Rotary Club	Herbert M. Williams, President
	Mrs. J. E. Nelson, President
Ladies Aid Society, Ponds Church	
Oakland Chamber of Commerce	Alexander Potash, President
Oakland Recreation Committee	Ben H. Wood, Chairman

Oakland Exempt Firemen's Ass'n	Henry R. Hopper, President
Oakland Public School	Harry A. Lister, Principal
Oakland Military Academy	Capt. John Sacka
Oakland Police Department	Frank L. Merrion, Chief
Oakland Republican Club	Harry J. Craven, President
	Mrs. Charles Sontag
Oakland Democratic Club	James Salvatore, President
	C. W. Baron
Oakland Garden Club	Mrs. Virginia Kanninen, President
Ramapo Mountain Lakes Civic Ass'n	Kenneth McBride, President
	Robert Collyer, Sr.
Oakland Heights Community Ass'n	David Harding, President
	Salvatore Daccurso
West Oakland Taxpayers Ass'n	Abram Taylor

#### CITIZENS COMMITTEE

David C. Bush	Ezra M. Terhune
Mrs. R. W. Morrell	Mrs. William Jeffers
Rev. C. E. Stoneton	Mrs. J. A. Pringle
Mrs. Milton G. Pulis	Mrs. Davis Ridley
Mrs. Arthur W. Vervaeet	Sidney Kingsley
	Selden Rodman

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